spare Rib

A BOON TO WOMANKIND
November 1977
Issue 64
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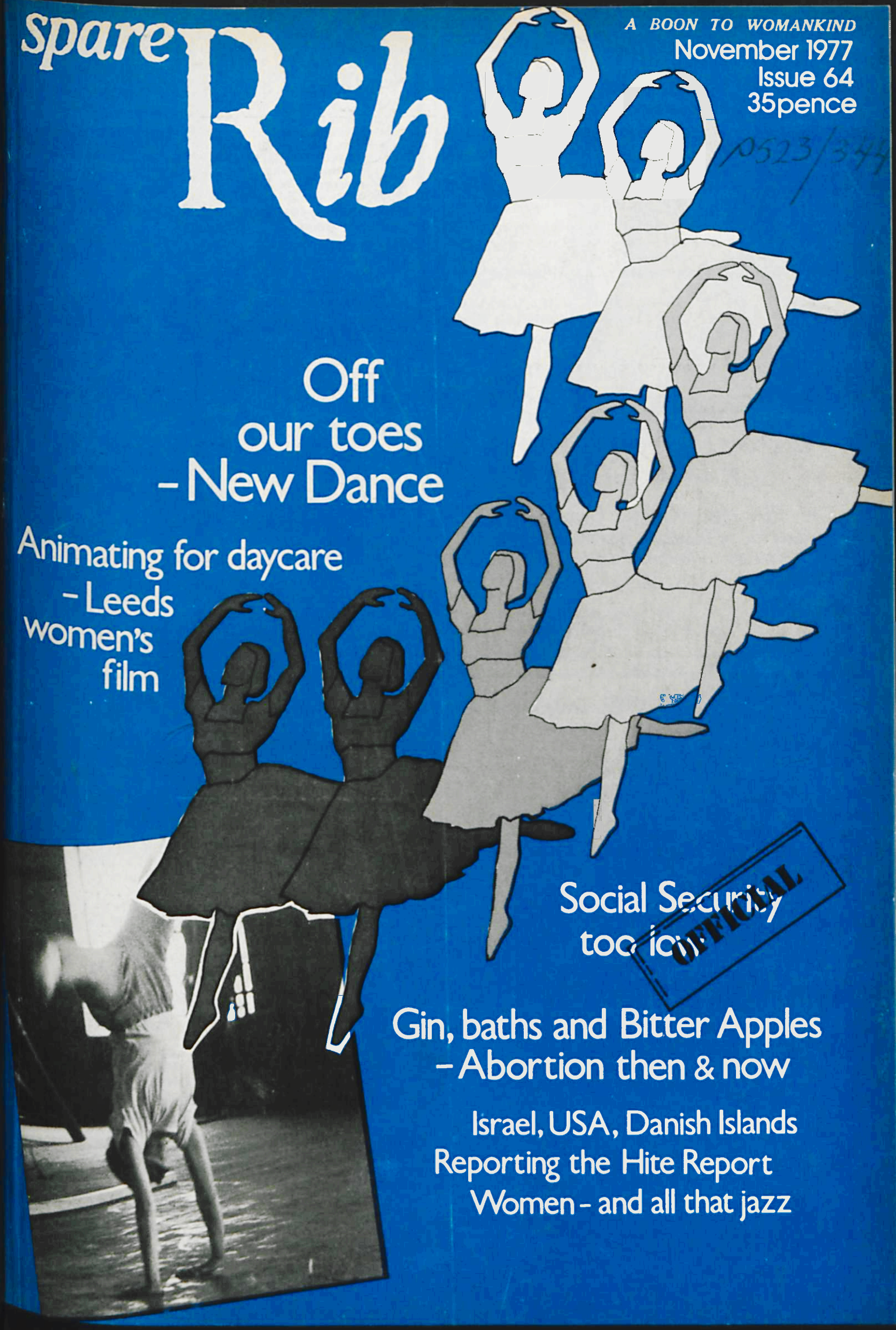

Off our toes - New Dance

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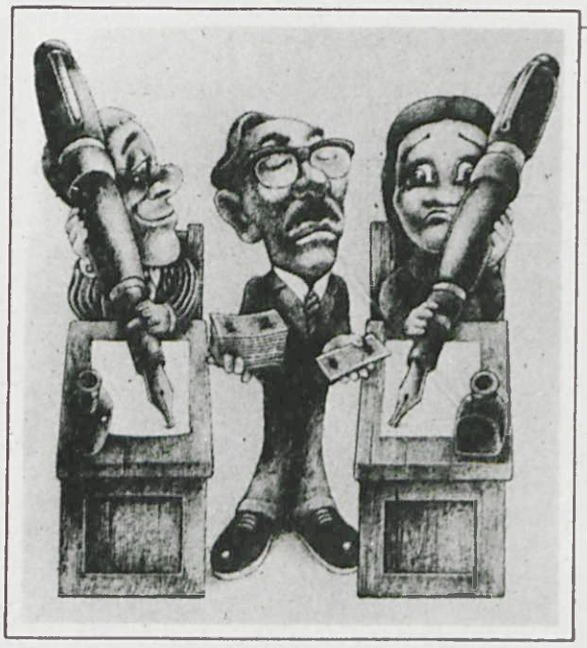

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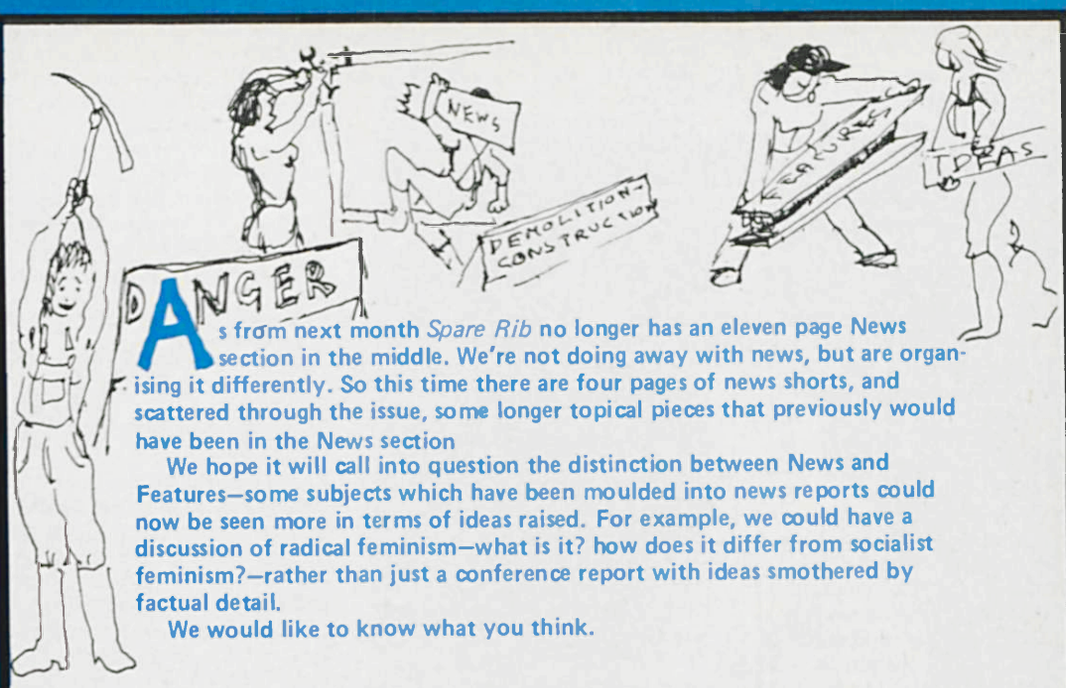

As from next month *Spare Rib* no longer has an eleven page News section in the middle. We're not doing away with news, but are organising it differently. So this time there are four pages of news shorts, and scattered through the issue, some longer topical pieces that previously would have been in the News section

We hope it will call into question the distinction between News and Features—some subjects which have been moulded into news reports could now be seen more in terms of ideas raised. For example, we could have a discussion of radical feminism—what is it? how does it differ from socialist feminism?—rather than just a conference report with ideas smothered by factual detail.

We would like to know what you think.

Features

5 **Off our toes** Finding new ways to dance
14 Lesbians camp on a Danish island
16 Israel—Women's Party stands for election
US—Funding feminists
18 **Talking to Shere Hite . . .** and what the papers said
37 **"I ain't going to have none—I know summat."**
Abortion remedies in Victorian and Edwardian England
40 **"We don't copulate without contraception, we don't copulate with contraception because we're too busy being good, decent, honourable citizens"**—meet Mclaren
42 **Women—and all that jazz** Kathy Stobart on soprano sax, plus *Moonspirit*
44 **The Nursery Film** Leeds women animate for better daycare
46 Social Security, and a new creche

Fiction

20 Bones-part 2 of a story set in South Africa by Ann Oosthuisen

Reviews

26 **Books**—where Kate Millett is at, motherhood as an institution, and *We're here*—lesbians speaking
Books for children—Shipwrecks, canals and class differences
Theatre—*Queen Christina* and the new Gay Sweatshop play
TV—Looking at the sexist media

Regulars

4 **Letters** Rape—Black women speak out, Sexuality—the vagina reassessed.
Continued on page 9
10-13 **News shorts**—Battered women's week of action, contraceptive cuts, Amazons in Amsterdam
24 **Shortlist** Campaigning and other things to do
32 **Classifieds**
36 **Back copies** on abortion
41 **Tooth & Nail's** wedding album
47 **Subscriptions**—Let's see more of *Spare Rib*!

Cover

New Dance photo by Geoff White

Spare Rib is produced collectively by Anny Brackx, Barbara Charles, Alison Fell, Susan Hemmings, Sue Hobbs, Laura Margolis, Gabrielle Mills, Natasha Morgan, Jill Nicholls, Rosie Parker, Ruthie Petrie, Linda Phillips, Janie Prince, Michele Roberts, Vicky Scrivener, Amanda Sebestyen, Carole Spedding, Lisa Vine, Ruth Wallsgrove.

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Black women testify

Dear Editor,
Your suggestions in August issue on Rape as to what women can do to safeguard themselves against rape left me wondering if you had considered Black women.

I don't suppose you are aware that a great number of us work at night—for instance in hospitals and therefore have to walk home alone at nights. The areas in which most of us are forced to live are lacking in most of the basic amenities such as street lighting. Are you therefore suggesting that we shouldn't go out to work at night and if so who should give us the money to look after ourselves and families?

Also statistics have shown that the majority of women are raped by men closely related or who they know. So what precautions should one take against being raped by say one's husband? Ultimately the only precaution is having the money to leave the marriage. Surely the aim must be for us women to be able to walk freely, anywhere.

Myself and many other Black women were really pleased with the way the connection was made at the Rape Trial, of how Black women have always been subjected to rape and expected to provide workers for the State—beginning with rape on the plantations and continued with producting children who will be used as cheap labour ('immigrants') in countries all over the world.

Mrs Desai's testimony described the rape of Asian women both in the factory and being forced to do extra housework (going out with foremen and supervisors) in order to get even normal wages, and so made clear that there can be no real separation between one form of exploitation—rape and another.

It was because the summons for the trial and the publicity put out by Women Against Rape made these connections so clear that so many Black and Immigrant women felt able to testify. And because so many of us gave evidence we were able to make clear that Black women face rape not only by white men but by black men too. We have not been able to say this up to now because of the racism which always assumes that black men rape more than white men and which has made it possible for judges and police to convict black men more easily—and not only for rape.

This racist attitude is not only levelled against Black men but also Black women. (Ironically, when we asked Women's Liberation to defend a meeting for Black women only in Bristol against the National Front some white women told us that we should have called the police to protect us rather than bother them.)

There was some talk in *SR* about the fact that Women Against Rape had not contacted enough women in Women's Liberation about the Rape Trial. In Bristol we were criticised for circulating and filling WAR's petition at a street festival in St Pauls, a black neighbourhood. The complaint was that the petition was incorrectly worded. But by whose judgement? Are they implying that us Black women are too stupid to judge for ourselves whether or not we want to sign a petition?

We noticed also that in spite of attacking WAR, *SR* has nowhere given space to what the aims and demands of WAR are. Is this because you don't wish your readers to judge the aims of WAR for themselves?
Yours faithfully,
Norma Steele,
Black Women in the Wages for Housework Campaign,
Bristol 6.

In our next issue we will be printing a letter from WAR.

Slung into roles

* Dear *Spare Rib*,
As a father who stayed at home and looked after his two children during their early years I was shocked and appalled at the 'Easy Rider' baby sling advert which filled the back page of *SR 62*.

What is all this crap of showing an 'attractive' middle class woman holding her darling Amber plus the caption 'Easy Rider is the baby carrier mothers believe in . . .' followed by 'Your baby needs to be close to you'.

If we are to break down sex roles, nuclear families etc, babies need to be close to anybody (of either sex) who is going to give them love.
Fraternally,
Gordon Wilson,
Leeds 6.

Nothing sinister

Dear *Spare Rib*,
I'm surprised at the racism of P Tarrant and L Shurey's letter and your endorsement of it in printing it. They ask how come The Wages For Housework Campaign has the money to fly Wilmette Brown—a Black woman from Wages For Housework in New York—to Europe, and imply that there must be some sinister financial backing involved. But I have never heard anyone ask how the thousands of white American women who have come to Europe on holiday or for a few months, raised the money to get here and whose presence has been welcomed as a strength for us all. Clearly the assumption is that Black women are not supposed to have the power to travel around the world to meet other women, but should really only move from one country to another only as immigrants who have been forced to move by the pressure of poverty.

I for one was excited by the fact that a Black woman from the US was able to travel and speak not only in England but France and Germany, and that the power of the struggle that Black women have made in North America is thus being made so tangibly available to women in Europe. And I see nothing sinister in either Wilmette's being able to buy herself an air ticket, or in the possibility that the Wages For Housework campaign internationally raised the money for her to travel.
In sisterhood,
Mary Thorpe.

We do not necessarily endorse all the letters we print. We try to print letters that are representative of our readers' opinions on particular issues.

Mysogynist humour

Dear *Spare Rib*,
After reading the article on Pam Gems in *SR 62*, we went along to see her play 'Dusa, Fish, Stas and Vi'. If the play wasn't going to be feminist, we at least expected it to be sympathetic to women. Having seen the play, we could only wonder where *Spare Rib* is at. We want to make various points about the play and *SR*'s treatment of it.

The play consisted of four caricatures of women—cynical prostitute, anorexic freak, hysterical divorcee and romantic revolutionary. It was easy for these exaggerated and unreal characters to become the butt of each other's and the playwright's jokes, some of which seemed on the same level of misogynist humour as conventional 'wife jokes'. A crude crack about abortion at 7 months and the incineration of babies, presented in the context of the present attack on abortion rights, is indicative of the way the play is written—as if in a political vacuum. Rather than exploring four women's lives, the play offers a spectacle of four women, destined if not designed for male consumption.

Connected with its anti-feminism was the play's crude representation of revolutionary politics, which took no account of the developments in feminist politics over the last decade or so. Fish (the 'socialist-feminist') dies of a broken heart in between giving lectures on Rosa Luxemburg and Lenin; the combination of these two political 'heroes' seeming to be the closest that Pam Gems gets to a fusion of socialism and feminism.

In view of all this (and more) why was *SR*'s article so devoid of political analysis? The article was simply a profile of an individual and in effect free publicity for her play. Was the intention to give us Pam Gems' life-story or to give an account of the relevance of her work to feminism? It seems to us that the latter should be *SR*'s concern, and the former is what we got. The play received 'critical acclaim' by the bourgeois press and its male critics. It's not hard to see why. For the same reasons as the men in the audience were convulsed with laughter the night we went.

We think there is something wrong in spending 3 pages of a feminist magazine on a playwright whose play is at worst hostile and at best irrelevant to feminism.
In sisterhood,
Eve Martin, Paula Smithe, Kate Poulton, Jenny Earle, London N4.

** Michelene Wandor replies: The intention of the article and interview was a) to open some discussion on the question of the relationship between women writers and the theatre, b) to raise some questions about Pam Gems and her work's relationship to feminism, which meant c) some location of her as an individual with a specific history (her 'life-story'). In addition to what appeared, there was a series of questions and answers about Pam's views on feminism, the left and struggle in the theatre; to my great regret these were lost somewhere along SR's production pipe line. I'm sorry that the information has ended up being incomplete. But I would point out that Pam and I did have an argument over 'Dusa, Fish . . .'*

Not the church, not the NF . . .

Dear *Spare Rib*,
Your correspondents P Tarrant and L Shurey say they know that Women for Life is financed by the Catholic Church and other right wing organisations. As the treasurer

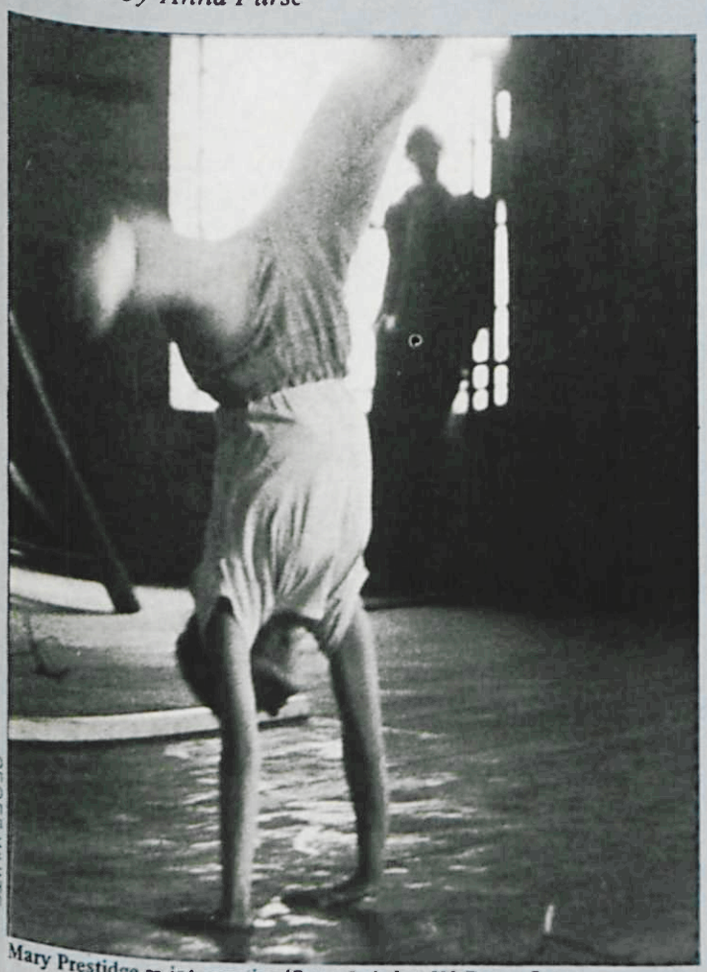
continued on page 9 →

** indicates that letters have been cut for reasons of space*

Off Our Toes

Dance consciousness is growing and new vigorous alternative forms are developing. But what's its relevance for the women's liberation movement? Myths and images of dance—ballet in particular—have probably had a greater influence on women than we realise. How many of us remember 'Sandra Of The Secret Ballet' and other heroines of girl's comics? Significantly, much of the new work and many of the experimental groups have been initiated by women. From a shared experience of an early Royal Ballet training, I asked *Jacky Lansley* about her work today and why she and so many others are finding new ways to dance.

Interview by Anna Furse



GEOFF WHITE

Mary Prestidge re-interpreting 'Swan Lake' at X6 Dance Space

(Above) Margot Fonteyn in 'Giselle' Act II

Photographs by Michael Peto are from the Michael Peto Collection at the University of Dundee library.

MICHAEL PETO FROM *THE DANCERS' WORLD*

The politically motivated dancer is still somewhat rare. How did your feminism evolve within your training and your profession?

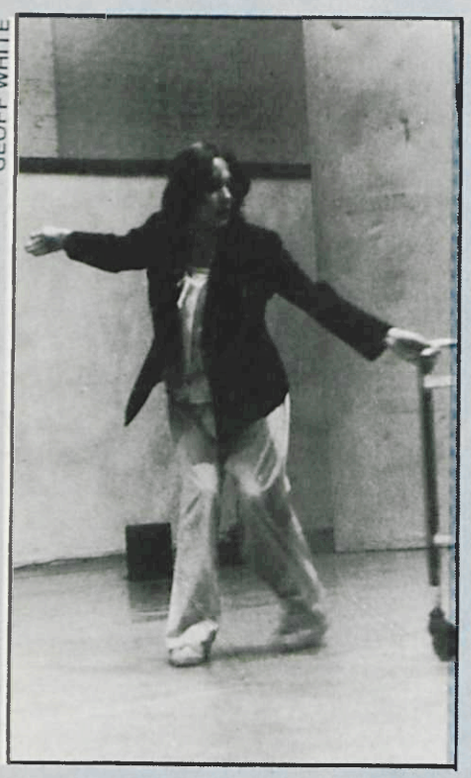
I left the Royal Ballet in the early 1970s, at a very active period for the women's movement. Then in 1971 when I went to the London School of Contemporary Dance I came into contact with other politically conscious women who were attempting to articulate their experience as women and dancers from a feminist standpoint. We started consciousness raising groups, political study groups, and feminist art groups where I began to understand how I had been oppressed as a ballet dancer.

What were you rebelling against in dance training?

You have to look at dance training in the relation to the conditions that produced it and how historically it evolved from an aristocratic culture and ideology. We were rebelling against the romantic images and roles that are projected in the ballet spectacle, and how throughout the years of training we were forced to internalise those images as an integral part of the skill.

The training begins very early, sometimes at three or four years old. If potential 'talent' is spotted, your whole education, home environment and social life is streamlined to becoming a ballerina. As a child I remember I was not allowed to participate in any sports, in case I injured myself, or 'developed the wrong muscles'.

GEOFF WHITE



MICHAEL PETO FROM THE DANCER'S WORLD

Royal Ballet School class–working daily with your image

(Left) Jacky Lansley dancing with a tea trolly in dance and politics

As a woman you are taught to deny your creativity, intellect and sexuality to conform to an exact, predetermined image. Severe dieting, for example, was common amongst ballet dancers–ballet teachers would approach pupils in class and whisper instructions to diet. There were many casualties, in some cases leading to total anorexia. We struggled to conform. The ideal was a kind of asexual femininity; and while men were allowed to be androgynous and homosexual, lesbianism was considered abhorrent, and to contradict the essential femininity.

You only have to look at the 'corps de ballet' to understand what this narcissistic struggle finally produces; rows of women with identical bodies and expressions dancing out swans, nymphs and spirits in perfect harmony, driven and coerced by their ambition to become a 'swan queen'.

Don't you think that facets of the training are like an intensified experience of growing up female: working with your own image in the mirror all the time, finding your vision of your image always unacceptable and inadequate, the self denial you talked of . . .

Yes, and it involves the aesthetic objectification of women–only as dancers we're paid to 'professionally' display our bodies as art/sex objects. Remember that before the emergence of the major ballet companies in the 1930s when ballet became a respectable art form in this country, it existed only as 'acts' in the music halls, and 'ballet girls' were regarded as high class prostitutes.

Today the image of the ballerina is a very important one–she epitomises the idealisation of 'woman' as the eternal feminine. Many little girls dream of becoming ballerinas–it is one of the few socially acceptable, encouraged adventures open to girls. Thousands of mothers live their own frustrated dreams and ambitions through their budding ballerina daughters, sometimes sacrificing everything for their careers, virtually becoming servants or 'dressers' to their own daughters. It's a fantasy open to women of all classes (not all races) and one often finds a successful ballerina from a working class background marrying an aristocratic man and elevating her social position as a symbol of her success.

What helped you move towards a new self definition and awareness?

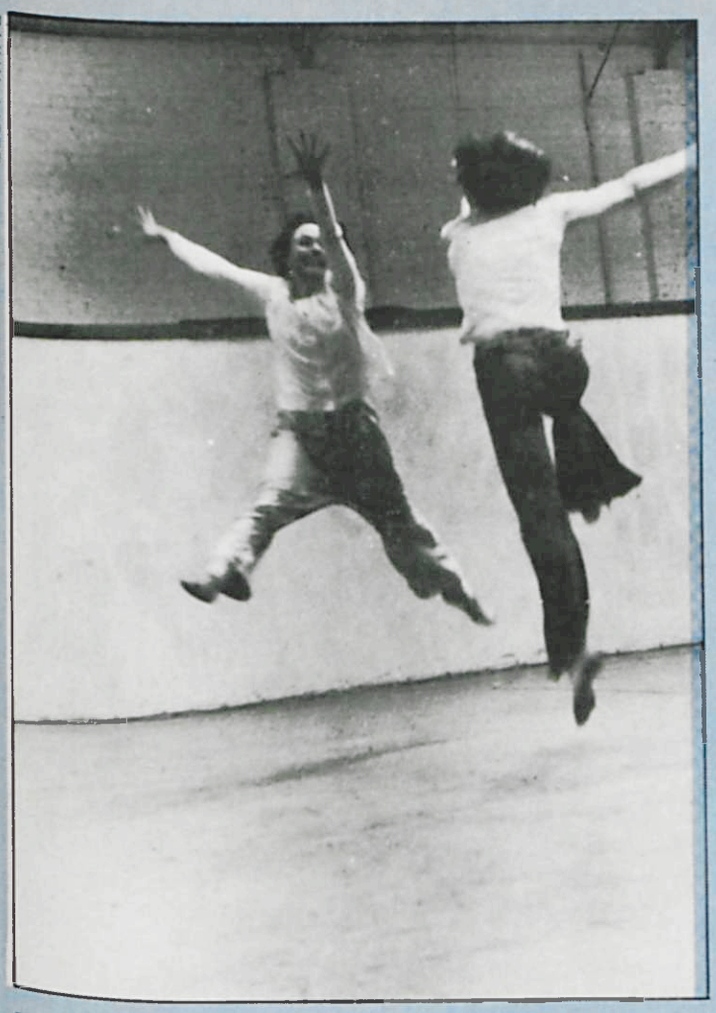
At the London School of Contemporary Dance I began to choreograph pieces of work (to create dances). I found it totally liberating, it was the idea that I could actually use my head to construct things out of my own experience rather than simply being the passive instrument of someone else's vision. At the Royal Ballet you were never encouraged to think you could choreograph and use your creativity in a more objective way, and anyway it was always assumed choreographers were men.

But isn't that a paradox–so much of the pioneering work in dance here and in the USA has been by women–Ninette de Valois as the founder of the Royal Ballet, Marie Rambert, Martha Graham . . .

Yes, but Ninette de Valois herself has said that women are good at pioneering and getting things off the ground but that only men can consolidate the inspiration–the old notion that women are good at spontaneous gestures but hopeless at continuing that objective, rational process necessary for any kind of productivity.

That women serve the function of a mother–nurturer, the hidden emotional force, but leave artistic, creative development to men.

Yes. Historically one can easily locate great dance Masters (teachers), innovators, dance philosophers whilst women could only win recognition in the field through their bodies as vehicles of male vision. Even on stage women have to disguise their strength and



GEOFF WHITE

Jacky Lansley and Vincent Meehan

MICHAEL PETO FROM *THE DANCER'S WORLD*

(Right) Margot Fonteyn and Rudolph Nureyev

virtuosity behind airy fairy characters, creating the impression that they are 'flying' when they are on point–in fact that requires tremendous strength and is extremely painful. Men on the other hand are able to openly display their strength and virtuosity like gymnasts without illusion.

Is there a dancers' union?
Dancers working in the big companies affiliate with Equity (the actors union) but, like fringe theatre groups, the small groups in the new alternative areas of dance are not unionised. They have formed pressure groups such as ADMA (Association of Dance and Mime Artists) which provides a political platform from which to fight for improved funding and conditions. The Arts Council, as the central funding body, is our main target, and at the moment we are attempting to standardise grant applications to include a basic living wage of £45 to correspond to the Equity minimum wage.

At the Royal Ballet were you and other dancers actively involved with the union?
When you joined the company you automatically became a member of Equity, but it was more like a token membership. The few people who became representatives and spokespeople were not taken seriously as dancers. This was particularly true for women. We were somehow encouraged to believe that art transcended mundane economic concerns, which blinded us to our rights as workers and 'kept us in line'.

Isn't it the old problem–the sense of privilege and prestige in having the opportunity to practice your art professionally working against political consciousness or action.
Yes, and as a female dancer one is highly dispensable. It is such a competitive environment–if you step out of line you can be instantly replaced by hundreds of other dancers craving work. It isolates you from your fellow workers, prevents solidarity or understanding of your role within the hierarchical institution you serve. This applies equally to 'modern' dance companies. The fact that they produce a marginally more contemporary product–like working in bare feet rather than ballet shoes–is really superficial–the training systems and organisational structures are just the same. What was so important about the work I did with Sally Potter when we formed 'Limited Dance Company' (a company of two) was that we were women working *with* each other and not in competition. We did a lot of teaching together, working with women, initiating collaborative situations, going to art schools and dance colleges.

Do you see any scope for consciousness raising within the framework of major dance companies?
The creative energy is being drained from traditional companies as more and more dancers decide to work in alternative ways. The new work should hopefully provide dancers working conventionally with a fresh perspective on their own situation. But for things to really change we have to try and drain off some of the funds that support the major dance companies–the millions poured into the Royal Opera House.

How can dance be a medium for exploring political ideas?
The way dancers organise themselves, where they choose to work, how they relate as men and women will determine what the public sees in performance. And politicisation of the working process will affect the way we dance and the content of our ideas. For example lots of people are consciously trying to demystify dance by using accessible, everyday movements like walking, running, jumping–challenging the specialist elitism of dance. I feel this is a very strong political statement.

FRANCIS GREEN

An alternative corps de ballet–'Limited Dance Company' performing with students at Bingley College.

MICHAEL PETO FROM *THE DANCER'S WORLD*

'Swan Lake' Act II

Could you tell me more about the form and content of the new work, and what changes it represents for women.
The new work is extremely diverse, and happens in all sorts of environments . . . parks, streets, halls, galleries. Working outside the theatre creates a greater intimacy with the audience and often invites participation. Nevertheless, theatrical elements like lights, costume, vivid imagery are sometimes used, but usually it is free from theatrical illusion and effect, and works much more spontaneously with the 'live' performance situation. There are no longer any standard techniques, and each performer finds their own way of moving that corresponds to their own body truth and consciousness.

The new images of women are often very athletic and active, we wear loose functional clothes which do not restrict the body, rather than leotards and costumes which display the legs.

Do you feel that by silently dancing out a new image of women you can possibly demonstrate an alternative?
Silent images can be very powerful. However, I think it's important to connect the images we are dancing with some real sense of what's happening to women in a wider social context, or else there's a danger of simply regarding the work as a new vogue aesthetic of what the 'modern' dancer should look like.

And the dancer's craft involves–inescapably–objectifying the body to the audience, something of a paradox to women struggling to reclaim our bodies. . .
Yes, because your body is the *form* through which you demonstrate ideas. I did a performance recently called 'Dance Object' dealing precisely with this paradox. I used a tape recording of my own voice describing my creative process and source material. The tape recorder played while I danced, allowing the audience to participate in both my 'intellectual' and physical process simultaneously.

Do you think then that with all the cross fertilisation of forms and mediums going on in the arts today, dance cannot remain 'pure' ie silent if it is to articulate itself politically?
Sometimes I feel it's necessary to articulate the ideas behind the images we project. In a performance I did for the ADMA festival called 'Dance and Politics' we used an image of a man dancing with a broom, the broom was tossed away to be replaced by a woman who leapt into his arms. It was a humorous demonstration of how in traditional dance companies men are always expected to lift and carry women, and how women become decorative objects in their arms. I feel you have to make it clear why you're using such an image or it could be seen as *merely* humorous, or worse, as sexist.

You're a member of the X6 group, a mixed collective, how does this work?
We're based at a large warehouse in London's abandoned dockland near Tower Bridge. There we teach, show new performance work, hold regular seminars and discussions on the theoretical aspects of dance, and produce a quarterly magazine called 'New Dance'. With all of this we want to stimulate a political awareness amongst the dance community. As a mixed collective we do have problems with sexism, but we attempt to deal with them in an organised and conscious way. For example in moments of crisis when we have a magazine deadline to meet it is easy to slip into conventional roles and patterns. We've noticed too that because we are a leaderless collective the general public will very often assume that the men in the group are the innovators–when I think it is true to say that most of the innovatory work during the past few years has been undertaken by women.

Do you feel there is a need for an all women dance group?
Yes. I think that because it's assumed dance is inherently an anti-sexist situation for men to be in as its very nature challenges male stereotypes and condones male homosexuality, it is also assumed to be unnecessary for women to work separately. But a lot of us disagree with this because we feel the issues involved are so complex and insidious that it is vital to work separately in order to understand the specific psychology of professional dance and how it oppresses us as women. A series of open women's workshops have been initiated at X6 in which we can combine consciousness raising with creative dance exploration.* I think they show that women need to work practically and physically together to understand our bodies in a much broader social, health context, to work towards an integration of our minds and our bodies and to find our own dance expression.□

** Anyone interested please telephone 01-407 0539 and ask for Jackie or Emilyn Claid.* **New Dance** *magazine is available from X6 Dance Space, Butlers Wharf, Lafone Street, SE1. 40p per copy or £2 for a year's subscription.*

LETTERS continued

of WFL I totally deny this. The Catholic Church has never given us money and probably does not agree with what we are doing, as we have always campaigned for free contraception and sterilisation on request. For the record, most of our activists are not Catholics.

As for the 'other right-wing organisations'—who exactly are they? I know of none. Considering that we've marched against the National Front, campaigned against nuclear weapons, supported the movement for one-parent families and helped a Chilean prisoner to come to Europe, it doesn't seem very likely that such organisations would wish to help us. The truth is that we get our funds in the usual way—from members' subscriptions, individual gifts, etc—and we are nearly always hard up. Anybody who does not believe me is welcome to see our bank account. Ms Tarrant and Ms Shurey also 'know' (and so does Amanda Sebestyen) that we are 'against abortion under any circumstances, including that of a raped woman'. We have never said such a thing. I personally believe that any woman who has been raped should have her womb washed out (if that is what she wants) so that she will not become pregnant, and most of our members agree with me that this is not the same thing as abortion. The fact that we are pro life does not mean that we are anti women, religious or right-wing. We went on the July 16th demonstration because like all other women, we want to stop rape. It is a pity that the NAC will not march beside us in such a good cause.

Yours sincerely,
Merryn Williams,
London E17.

We think Women for Life should be prepared to take responsibility for its right wing anti-feminist views and connections. Women for Life claim to be feminists and yet their organisation was set up for the express purpose of banning abortion. Abortion on Demand is one of the four original demands of the Women's Liberation Movement. Of course there are women in the movement who have qualms about abortion for themselves but they do not believe in their right to impose this view on others, and certainly they do not organise in direct opposition to one of the most vigorous campaigns organised by women in Britain today. As to the association of anti-abortion groups, including Women for Life, with the National Front (who call for a ban on abortion in their election manifesto), we do know that Front members march with these groups, with the latter's recognition and consent. It is true that the Front have been refused permission to carry their banners, but that is because the anti-abortionists claim their demonstration to be 'non political'.

Ms Williams talks of women having their wombs washed out. If she is referring to douching, she should be warned that this is an outdated and ineffective contraceptive technique and in any case the douche does not or should not enter the womb at all. Or possibly she is referring to a highly dangerous method of self-induced abortion in which a soapy liquid is introduced into the womb and causes an abortion . . . we hope she isn't.

It is quite understandable that NAC members, fresh from very hectic campaigning against the Benyon Bill which fell the day before the Rape demo, would feel reservations about marching with the opposition. The NF are probably anti rape, but we hope that we would all recognise the dangers of allowing the NF to join us even in 'such a good cause'.
The Spare Rib Collective.

Conceiving on the Pill

Dear *Spare Rib*,
Is it widely known that tranquillisers and antibiotics reduce the effectiveness of the Pill? I was told this fact when I recently visited a Family Planning Clinic. As I am on one of the lower dosage Pills, Eugynon 30, I was told to use additional contraceptives should my doctor prescribe the other pillls mentioned. I thought I was reasonably well-informed about such matters but the thought that I could have been risking pregnancy came as rather a shock.
In sisterhood,
Penelope Spelling,
Brighton.

An article on the interaction of the Pill and other drugs will appear in SR *soon.*

The Life of the Vagina

Dear *Spare Rib*,
We are writing in response to last month's letter from Diane who found 'the actual act of penetration rather pointless'. We are aware that the subject really requires an article in order to begin to deal adequately with the issues raised, not just a letter, but all the same we would like to express our concern at the tendency within the Women's Movement which neglects and even represses the life of the vagina.

In our experience vaginas can want, reach, grip, throb, heat and do all sorts of other intensely pleasurable things. Movement and touch deep down inside them can send waves of energy and feeling outwards to every part of the body. In clitoral sex, where the orgasm is the ultimate goal, the period of stimulation tends to be passive. There is a separateness from the person we are with and a tremendous concentration on ourselves in the process of getting there. In sex with the penis inside, not only is it possible for each movement to be lingered over and enjoyed, it can at the same time be shared. We can wait and start again and play and move. It seems much more active and communicative sex (when it's good, that is).

Negative feelings about the vagina exist in the Women's Movement, and have arisen partially as a reaction against the traditional primacy of the vagina and total neglect of the clitoris. This has led to a situation where the clitoris is attributed equivalence with the penis as the sole sexual organ. Another reason is that the act of penetration has come to symbolise the social and economic control and subjugation of women. By denying men penetration we are denying them their ultimate symbol of domination. Historically this denial has been one of the few ways available to women in their struggle to control their own lives.

It's true that vaginal receptivity entails dependence on men, but there is a mutuality about it, they are dependent on us too.

And to return to the letter in *SR 62*, giving pleasure when you fuck can actually be quite pleasurable. Although fucking is in some situations a service, it isn't necessarily so. So let us not cut off our nose to spite our face.
Yours,
N Morgan, M Nava,
London.

Mujeres Libres

Dear *Spare Rib*,
I've just seen *SR 60* with the article on Women's Liberation in Spain. This was interesting as far as it went, but it was rather surprising to find no mention of libertarian/anarchist tendencies in the movement. I know there was a saving clause about 'too many groups to list', however, the strength of the libertarian tradition in Spain and its revival in the post-Franco upsurge of political activity, should make it difficult to ignore, especially when one of the centres under discussion was Barcelona, well known anarchist stronghold. The Communist Party rated a mention, despite its highly dubious record both in Spain and on the question of Women's Liberation. Other left parties were alluded to in general terms, but we are left to guess whether the big trade union demonstration outside Barcelona which women considered joining was in fact that of the libertarian CNT.

In particular the group Mujeres Libres (Free Women), whose antecedents go back to the Civil War, and which is once again making its presence felt in Spain after years of tenuous survival in exile, should, I feel, have been featured. For those interested, a translation of the main points in this group's programme was published in *Zero* No 1 and in *Freedom* in May this year (both are anarchist papers published in London).
Best wishes,
Liz Willis,
London W13.

Stopcock jargon

Dear *Spare Rib*,
The recent article on mending toilets was both useful and well presented. However, might I as a fellow plumber suggest a simplification on one point. In any dealings with the supply of water from the cistern to the pan, rather than turning off the main stopcock, it is only necessary to tie up the floating arm of the ballvalve with string or wire, to stop all incoming water. When the cistern has been flushed empty one can dismantle any part of the toilet without problems.

On a related area, what a drag it is to have to use so much 'male-oriented jargon' to repair anything—what with nipples, male/female threads, ballvalves etc. Maybe it's time for some rewriting; the only term worth keeping being stopcock.
Yours in cisternhood,
Ophelia Benz,
London WC2.

NEWS SHORTS

Battered women's week of action

"Every week should be a week of action for Women's Aid—we've got a lot of fighting to do!" This was the rallying cry for 1500 women and children who marched through Birmingham city centre on Saturday September 24.

The march was a great end to the National Women's Aid Federation's week of action. It was the first time we had all got out onto the streets to call for action for battered women. We shouted and sang for more refuges, houses, financial independence and legal protection.

Birmingham still hasn't got a refuge; given its size it should have accommodation for at least 100 families. Though there are now over 100 refuges in England and Wales affiliated to NWAF, there should be 1000 according to the Select Committee on Violence in Marriage (1975).

Most women marching were from Women's Aid refuges and support groups, and there was a feeling of strength and sisterhood—particularly when we came round the corner at the end of the march and saw hundreds more women and children crowded together on the steps of the public library. It was disappointing that there was not more support from the Women's Liberation Movement—from women not actively involved in Women's Aid—because the march clearly showed our identification with the movement.

JANE HUTT

Demonstrating in Birmingham

Some of what went on . . .

Meetings, street stalls, information displays, leafletting and picketing . . . We got good coverage in local media. Manchester Women's Aid did a TV programme with such a large response that they were asked back to do another later in the week. The march was covered on the national TV news on Saturday night. Everyone I've spoken to enjoyed getting out and telling people about Women's Aid. So much of our time is spent in coping with crises, paying the bills, endless meetings, leaving little time and energy for political campaigning.

* **Manchester** put on an evening of information and entertainment, showing the film 'That's No Lady' by the Sheffield Film Co-op; **Lancaster** put on a play they had devised themselves along Punch and Judy lines—apparently it was fantastic. Perhaps they would consider doing it elsewhere?

* **Wales** had a day of action with a stall in **Cardiff**'s main shopping street—women came from Swansea, Newport and Pontypridd to give out leaflets and talk to people on the street. A tape-recording of songs and interviews attracted a lot of attention and they showed their video 'They pretend we don't exist' for the first time. In **Swansea** there was a picket of the Magistrates Courts, and a public meeting; and in **Newport** a bargain shop and displays.

* **Bradford** gave out leaflets and sang well known favourites such as 'I'm gonna be an engineer . . . ' in

Lesbians go it alone

Lesbians in the Campaign for Homosexual Equality have broken away after years of work for an organisation that 'refuses to acknowledge our existence'.

Nineteen of the 20 women at CHE's annual conference in Nottingham in September decided they wanted to organise separately from now on. They have chosen a tentative name—the National Organisation for Gay Women—and are holding a conference on November 5 ('We mean to start with a Bang!') to determine structure and aims. They've sent out a postal ballot to all women in CHE to find out their views, but the National Organisation for Gay Women will go ahead anyway.

CHE has always been heavily male-dominated, with many men indifferent to feminism, or even to gay women's specific problems. "We could raise only £3 for Action for Lesbian Parents," said Nikki Henriques, ex-Women's Organiser for CHE, "but members gave £24,000 for the defence of *Gay News*. Women are not wanted—only tolerated." Some men at the CHE conference argued passionately against affiliating to the National Abortion Campaign, speaking of abortion as murder. This was the last straw for the women, who express doubts that many men in CHE actually *want* to change anything in society, or see CHE as anything other than a social club—with women making the sandwiches.

The NOGW is seen as being looser and more spontaneous than CHE, giving support to and co-ordinating information about other lesbian groups in existence. They want to liaise with other homosexual organisations, including CHE, and with civil rights groups. They don't want to force a choice between CHE and NOGW; women can belong to both.

Nikki Henriques doesn't want it to be 'ultra-political and over-intellectual', but stresses that the organisation's form depends on what women want from it. She asks women to come to the conference with ideas, and if possible to write to her beforehand.□

See Shortlist for details.

Colquhoun sacked

Maureen Colquhoun, Labour MP for Northampton North, has been kicked out—for being a lesbian. No one in the Labour Party, not even the women MPs or the Tribune group of which she is treasurer, has done a thing about it.

The constituency party's management committee voted against readopting her at the next election because of 'her recent statements and general behaviour'. Some of them were outraged that she was a lesbian, and worse still '*glad* to be gay'.

They also accused her of being too concerned with 'trivial issues' like women's rights. Complaints that she was a racist, following rather confused remarks she'd made about Enoch Powell, were withdrawn when she explained that she meant that the Labour Party should stop 'setting up Powell as the bogeyman' and start putting 'money into solving the problems of poor blacks and poor whites in inner cities'. Male gay MPs have never suffered this scale of attack—a lesbian feminist MP is more than the system can take. What can feminists do to support her?

Aleine Ridge

their shopping precinct; women shoppers stopped, listened and chatted with the singers. Bradford and Leeds did the 'You and Yours' programme on Radio 4, and there were film shows in Sunderland and Middlesborough.

* Norwich put on a big display in the Arts Centre and held advice sessions in local community centres. There was a public meeting in Cambridge.

* Bath had a street stall all week. Bristol held a public meeting and a disco. Women in Taunton gave out leaflets and had a display.

* Milton Keynes did a local TV programme and held a public meeting; Stevenage had a market stall and there were stalls, public meetings and an exhibition in Oxford.

* Leicester covered their mini-bus with posters and leaflets and toured outlying council estates and villages where Women's Aid is not known, stopping at shops and schools to hand out leaflets. This was so successful they're thinking of doing it regularly. Loughborough had a sponsored walk and a public meeting. Corby put on a film show. There was petitioning and a radio programme in Birmingham.

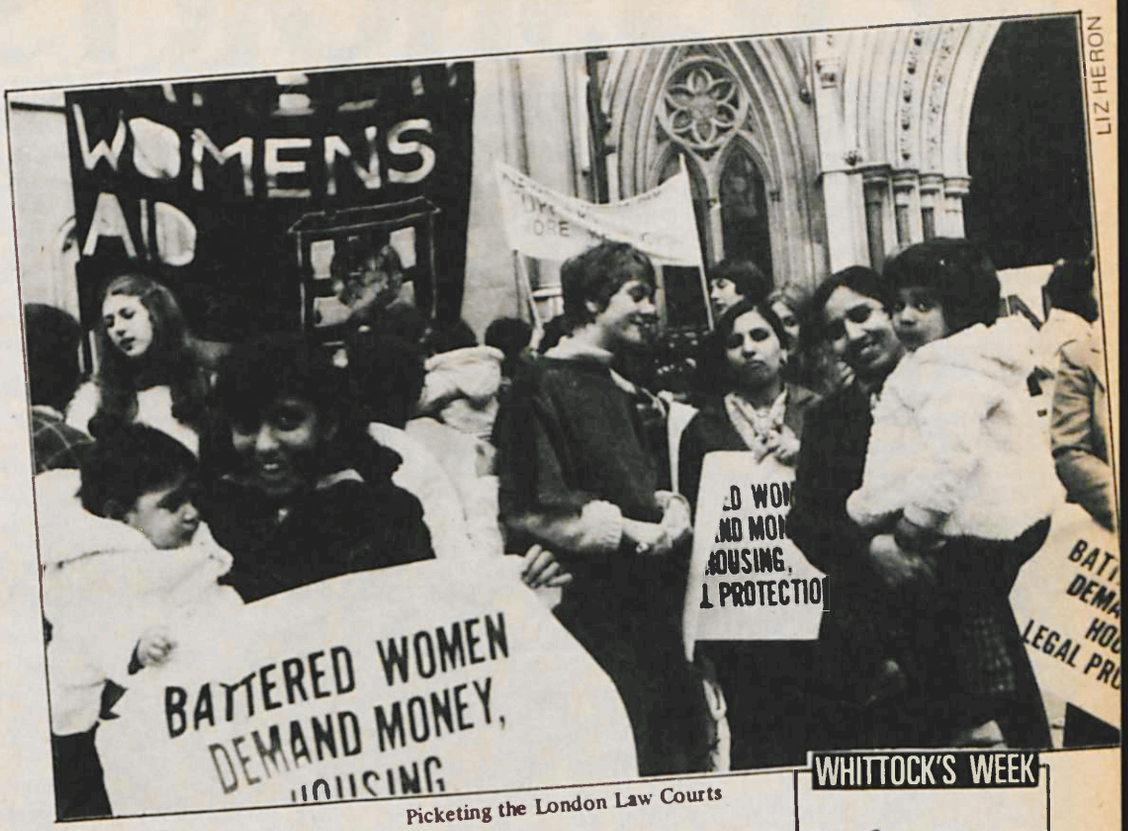
* London region picketed the Law Courts. About 100 women and children marched down to the Courts where they sang songs, shouted slogans and generally harangued all the barristers they could, then went on to the sacred Inns of Law to 'disturb the peace', letting the legal profession know what they thought of them. There were stalls in Shepherds Bush, Portobello, Brixton and Chapel Hill markets; public meetings in Southwark and Barnet, and displays in libraries, leafletting and again, media coverage.

Not only did the week of action bring us all out into the streets, it also brought us closer together—women in refuges and support groups, and groups in the same region.

Women's Aid is about fighting for battered women to be able to control their own lives—it's not about providing a cheap social service or sweeping the problem under the carpet. We are fighting to change a society which condones and laughs at violence against women.□

Report compiled by Jane Hutt in Cardiff. For more info, contact NWAF, 51 Chalcot Road, London NW1 (01-586 0104).

Scottish Women's Aid, which is associated to the NWAF, had its annual conference in September. Annual report available from Ainslie House, 11 St Colme St, Edinburgh (send sae).



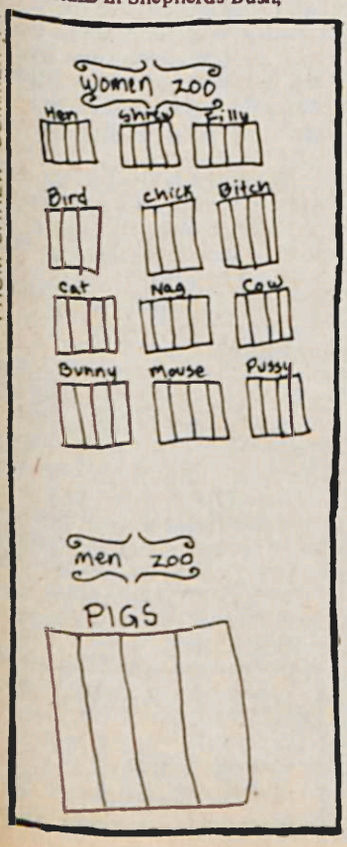
LIZ HERON

Picketing the London Law Courts

JANE HUTT

WHITTOCK'S WEEK

How the 'Birmingham Evening Mail' reported the week of action —sent in by Barbara Holland



FROM 'SHREW' SUMMER '74

A bitter pill?

The mythology around hormonal changes in women is growing. Here's a contribution by Jerone Lejeune, a French scientist, who also discovered the extra chromosome responsible for mongolism.

Apparently he's now found links between extra hormones such as those in the pill, and the development of the brain. The human brain is not fully developed until late teens and Prof Lejeune thinks that an extra dose of those hormones could affect the brain as it develops, and corrupt its normal sexual patterns. Guess what might happen. No, not hairy legs or chest, but the creation of the ultimate female mutant: the lesbian.

All this is based on scientific research . . . Tests on young rats in America had turned them against the opposite sex. So girls be careful with your pill and its built-in obsolescence!

Brains are getting heavier, especially the male kind. The average weight of the male brain has risen from 1,372 grammes in 1860 to 1,424 grammes in modern times. Apparently we haven't even reached their 1860 average, with our 1,265 grammes. Still, we've put on 23 grammes.□

Ultrasound scanning

A new type of ultrasound scanner—called a 'real time' scanner—could be used to detect abnormal foetuses early in pregnancy, when a safe, easy abortion is still possible.

Heart disease could be diagnosed by watching the foetus when it's just a few weeks old and seeing movement on its aorta and heart valves. It could also detect foetuses with neural tube defects. As yet it's not routinely available as few people are trained to interpet the ultrasound images.

Ironically, the technique was first tried on foetuses by Ian Donald, former professor of midwifery at Glasgow University, a leading anti-abortion campaigner.□

Still-born

Molly Hall-Say, who campaigned against the rundown of her local maternity home, has had a still-born child after being sent 26 miles to another hospital because of complications giving birth.

When the baby was two weeks overdue, she was admitted to Old Tree Maternity Home near Launceston in Cornwall. Three days later she haemorrhaged and was sent to Plymouth General Hospital.

She had fought health service cuts because she feared this long journey could endanger babies' lives.□

NEWSSHORTS

Men on top

The Health Education Council has launched a contraceptives advertising campaign including cinema, radio and the press, to reduce the 200,000 unplanned pregnancies in Britain each year. A creditable venture on all accounts, but why for God's sake perpetuate stereotypes: the man's not only on top, in one of the display ads, but he's also referred to as 'a man', whereas she is just 'a girl'. Does the Health Education Council want to convince us of manly virility and girlish innocence?□

Durex on the tube

Meanwhile London Transport has defended its decision to display advertisements of contraceptives to a Tory education spokesman, Dr Rhodes Boyson, who feels the word 'Durex', now on display in London tube stations, to be 'an affront to childhood'. London Transport responded coyly, that the ad was discreet enough not to be offensive to passengers, and that it was 'not in any way in bad taste'.□

Men over 50 sometimes have a drip. A solution is now at hand! The 'gents' sanitary pad'. The Swedish Institute of the Handicapped are manufacturing them and they stay in place inside underwear, they claim, much the same way as a cricketer's box. Is the box an ego-boost for an ordinary nappy?□

Eve Wadzamwina used to straighten her hair...

Now she is fighting to achieve something of a far greater significance . . . the liberation of her country, Zimbabwe. Leslye Levy reports.

Look what I came across in October's *Honey* right next to a glossy red nail guard ad. It struck me as good because it so neatly folds politics in with fashion, picking up on what the readers expect and subtly subverting it.

We're told Eve has 'Dark, heavy-lidded eyes. Broad, slightly flattened nose and a luscious, sensual mouth'—the stereotype of the black woman—and that 'every man who meets her falls in love with her' (so she's worth reading about!). But she's quoted at length . . .

> "I once thought that peaceful resistance would change things. I once believed in fairies, too."

. . . ' "Do you know, I used to spend hours a week straightening my hair" (and lightening her skin). "Now it's difficult to find a piece of soap! I can handle a gun very well now but it's mainly my nursing services that are needed," a slight smile. "Male chauvinism is alive and well and living in the heart of the black revolution!" '

And journalist Leslye Levy raises questions about her own liberalism. Her guilt and Eve's suspicion are resolved through the perfect *Honey* symbol—'a small bottle of lotion', which Eve thrusts into Leslye's hand as she's leaving. A peace offering, it shows they're both girls at heart, all girls are alike; a tear jerks—but this is no 'fragile skin toner', not one of the ads; it's a practical lotion to heal the mosquito bites on the white woman's face.□

Jill Nicholls

CONTRACEPTIVE CUTS

It is now three years since the Government took over the supply and distribution of contraceptives. The results of the takeover have not all been beneficial.

According to a survey being carried out by the Family Planning Association, clinics are seeing only half as many women as they did before the takeovers. The Area Health Authority clinics (as they've become) hold shorter sessions, see fewer patients per hour and are less flexible than their predecessors. (FPA clinics kept cancelled sessions open for casual clients, very often the people who wouldn't come back if they suffered an initial rebuff.)

This clearly creates long waiting lists, forcing women to consult their GPs instead of using clinics—a useful way for the AHA to cut costs by passing the bill to the General Practitioners Committee who fund GPs. Some AHAs are also cutting clinic sessions—other economies include cutting back on the range of contraceptives stocked. Some clinics have as few as six kinds of 'pill', so women may be forced to change brands when they change clinics. Doctors *are* allowed to prescribe pills which are not actually in stock but not all of them are aware of this.

These cutbacks would be less worrying if GPs provided a genuine alternative. Unfortunately they don't Few have bothered to get extra training in the use and prescription of contraceptives. Far too many doctors just hand out pill prescriptions without adequate knowledge of a woman's particular needs and very often without even a blood pressure test. Perhaps more important, only 5000 of the 21,000 GPs giving contraceptive advice know how to insert IUDs and there is no indication that any more of them know how to fit diaphragms. Since GPs are paid extra for providing contraceptives, they have a disincentive for referring on to a clinic where a wider range of methods *should* be available.

This situation is even more worrying against the background of a recent survey by Colin Brewer, adviser to the British Pregnancy Advisory Service. He found that nearly half the women interviewed were pregnant because of contraceptive failure which he attributes in many cases to inappropriate advice from their doctors.□

Angela Phillips

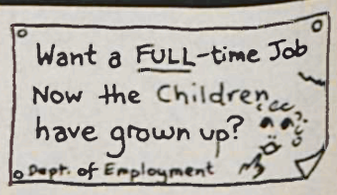
Tribunals – £506 refund

Letitia Kirkwood, comptometer operator at David Scott's in Glasgow, has won her claim for equal pay with a male bonus clerk. She gets £506 in back pay.

Both were clerical workers doing calculation. The company claimed he was senior to her, though he said he couldn't see any relevant difference. The company then claimed his job had been given a higher rating in a job evaluation study. But TASS, the union concerned, had not been consulted about the grading system and the tribunal ruled that a job evaluation which had not been properly constituted and agreed to by both sides should be disregarded.□

Linda Price has won her case against the Civil Service Commission (see *SR* 51 & 55). The Employment Appeals Tribunal agreed with her that the Civil Service's upper age limit of 28 indirectly discriminates against married women with children□

The second statement attributed to WAR in *SR* 63, page 27, was made by Wages for Housework, supporting WAR's petition.



This poster, on show for years in job centres all over the country, now looks like a sick joke, with few jobs for anyone and frequent insinuations that married women should step aside and leave jobs for the boys.

The Employment Services Agency is instructing its centre managers to take the poster down. "It is debatable whether it would be desirable to put this slogan up in the present climate of labour supply," is how they put it.

Women are now a staggering proportion of the registered unemployed—one in four on the register, according to the third annual report of the Manpower Services Commission. And although married women often don't bother signing on as it's not worth their while, they now make up 10% of the unemployment register—this has doubled in three years.□

NEWS COPYDATES

SR 65: October 21
SR 66: November 18

U.S. Rape Judge Ousted

In May Judge Simonson of Dane County, Wisconsin, ruled that a 15-year-old boy found guilty of raping a 16-year-old girl in their High School was to be put under court supervision at home instead of going to prison.

Four months later he was ousted out of office—not because of his lenient sentence but his sexist reasons for it. "We have women appearing without bras and with nipples fully exposed . . . are we supposed to take an impressionable person 15 or 16 years of age and punish him severely because he reacts to it normally?" said this pillar of society, adding "whether you like it or not a woman's a sex object and they're the ones that turn the men on generally."

Various women's groups with the support of the local community set up The Dane County Committee to Recall Judge Simonson and organised a petition to force a new election for the judge's seat. They were successful and out he went.

In a recent trial in Britain, Justice Wien sentencing a man to 12 years imprisonment for double rape, said, "The fact is, you have a strong sexual drive . . ." Are we to conclude with Simonson and Wien that rape is caused either by women dressing 'provocatively' (ie in anything except a heavy duty brown blanket) or by unusually over-sexed men? It's time rape was seen to be the result of the way men are socialised to look at women—'there for the taking'.□

HIS 'N HER TOOLS

As a result of a US Air Force survey, an American firm plans to introduce a range of tools suitable for women. The survey found that women have difficulty handling some tools (such as crimping tools, wire strippers and soldering irons) because they are designed to fit a man's hand, on average 2.4cms longer than a woman's.

Is this a gimmick or an advantage for women, making male skills more accessible to us? Tools for considerably smaller hands could be useful to some women (and some men too)—so long as they're equally sturdy and don't have pink handles!□

Sisterhood International

The women's movement has always tried to operate internationally. We've supported the Three Marias on trial in Portugal, rape victims in Australia and Italy, women in prison in Argentina and Chile. We've organised demonstrations, fund-raising, letter and telegram campaigns.

Now a network is being set up to mobilise this international solidarity more quickly and efficiently. We need to move especially quickly around women's trials and strikes, and we need to spread information more widely about feminist actions and conferences.

The International Feminist Network, proposed at the International Tribunal of Crimes Against Women in Brussels in March 1974, is now being co-ordinated by ISIS (Women's International Information and Communication Service). More volunteers are still needed to relay information inside their own country. Women needing international support should write or phone the ISIS collectives in Geneva (Case Postale 301, CH 1227 Carouge, Switzerland, tel: 022/43 40 22) or in Rome (Via della Pelliccia 31, tel: 01/58 08 231). Any donations to these addresses.□

J P GOODCHILD

At midday, in bright sunlight, twelve Amazons on horseback opened the Amsterdam Women's Festival on September 3. On stage two women swathed in classical robes recited the history of the Amazons while the women on horseback acted it out on the grass, helped by an enthusiastic army of young Amazons aged 4 to 14, dressed in white tunics and armed with bows and arrows.

Held in a large park in central Amsterdam, the festival attracted a huge crowd of people—mainly women. Many stalls for different pressure groups within the women's movement were packed with women reading, looking, talking and buying. Women's bands, including Jam Today, played on the large stage, and a hilarious Dutch theatre group acted out parodies of TV commercials and other ways women are sex-stereotyped. On a smaller stage there was quieter music and cabaret, and in a tent women's films were shown continuously.

That evening all four floors and the garden of Amsterdam's Women's House were crammed with women dancing, watching films, or just talking and drinking. The whole festival was full of fun and energy, showing the growing strength of the movement in Holland.

Caroline Gillfillan

ITALY—Abortion Crisis

Crisis broke out for Italian women on September 1, when CISA (Information, Sterilisation and Abortion Centre) decided to stop doing abortions in Italy, where abortion is still considered 'a crime against the integrity and health of the race'.

Founded in 1973, CISA had set up centres all over Italy doing abortions by menstrual extraction.

Never a self-help organisation, it had over the years become more and more just a technical service—partly through lack of time, as so many women were coming to it. Feminist collectives like the 'Associazione Demografica' were critical of CISA, because it refused to share its knowledge with them, and because they believe women having abortions should participate in the process, so gaining control over their own bodies.

Nonetheless, CISA provided a vital service. It intends to go on organising trips to London for women more than eight weeks pregnant, but is raising its price for this to 28,000 lire (£180).

Other women hope to learn to do early abortions themselves and, unlike CISA, decentralise the practice. For later abortions they want to organise *cheaper* trips to London. For this they need contact with women here.□

Any offers of help to Associazione Demografica, Via Morandi 50, Firenze, Italy.

J P GOODCHILD

Lesbian Summer camp

by Caroline Gilfillan

For several years the Danish Women's Liberation Movement—the Redstockings—have been running a women's summer camp on the island of Femø. Up to 180 women stay there in big tents each holding about 25 women. Each tent takes it in turns to cook, wash up, empty the toilets and clean the big common tent ready for the nightly meeting. The camp lasts about six weeks, and each week has a theme for discussion, for example 'women's culture', 'an introduction to the women's movement' or 'women and the labour movement'. Most women who go to Femø book up and stay for one week only. In past years, the last week has always been for women of any nationality, but this year the Redstockings decided not to hold an international week.

This summer, for the first time, the women of the Lesbian Movement in Denmark decided to organise their own own camp. They were dissatisfied because, though they had put work and energy into running the camp at Femø, they always had to *ask* specially for a week to be assigned to lesbians. They also wanted to run a far smaller camp for 60 women, and to try a new set-up and surroundings: Femø had become fairly fixed in its ways. And they wanted to run a week or two for international women.

As at Femø, each week had a basic theme: Copenhagen lesbian week, open lesbian week for women from any part of Denmark, Scandinavian week, anarchism and women, women's culture, two international weeks.

Although the camp was run by the Danish Lesbian Movement, it was open to heterosexual women and to children. At no time was it necessary to declare or 'prove' your sexuality. It was just that lesbianism was the norm, and discussion took place from this standpoint.

I asked one of the Danish women why and how the camp on Sejerø was formed.

"After talking about it for six months we formed a group to find an island, but they gave up in March because it was so hard! Then after a long intense discussion at a lesbian seminar about whether we should make the camp, the camp group took up the problem again. We were lucky to get Sejerø, since the islanders had refused other camps, both for religious reasons and because the island has very little water. Only about three people knew we were lesbians! But then we made posters and gave interviews in the press, and it became generally known.

"We wanted to organise in a new way. We wanted a small camp, with closer contact between the women. We planned for 60 women, though there were nearly always more than that there. We decided against a fixed structure, where duties are rotated. Women did what they felt needed doing.

"We consciously decided not to have electricity on the camp, wanting to avoid taped music and electric lights etc, and we decided not to have tables, and that the cooking tent would also be the common tent. This was so that eating/cooking/talking could be integrated. We got hold of low wooden crates, which meant that women sat closer to the ground, and children were not left out. We decided to allow children to come, but didn't provide a creche or paid childcare, so that all the women should feel and take some responsibility for the children.

"The food was vegetarian, which made cooking and shopping simpler and safer (far less risk of stomach upsets). Many of us were vegetarians in any case. And finally, we made the price as low as possible (£25 a week or less if you couldn't afford it).

"The camp could go back to Sejerø next year, it made enough money, but we don't know if it will happen again. The Sejerø group resigned when the first tent was up!

"We all felt it was 'our camp'—not run by a collective. We all took reponsibility. For example, no one woman took care of the money; it was passed to whoever felt she wanted to look after it at the time. Also women in Copenhagen with cars took vegetables and supplies to the Sejerø ferry for the camp. Things like that.

"The last two weeks of the camp were intended to be international, but we knew these would be overcrowded, so it was half-official that foreign women could come at any time, and quite a lot did. But this did not really create a problem; the main problem was that there were always too many women, because we decided not to send any away.

"Because meetings were not planned, some women who went wanting a programme of regular discussion were very frustrated. They felt they wanted a structure, and found it difficult to call a meeting, since a lot of women just wanted to relax. But some women really blossomed. Functioning in that way is a new experience. Taking responsibility for yourself is hard. I should like to function in that way even if it takes years: but some women didn't want to try. It didn't work properly, but then this was the first year, and it takes a long time to learn a new way of being together."

I was going to Sejerø with a friend, and our curiosity about the camp was rising as we drew near the island. We had heard that it was being organised on anarchist principles, with very little structure—a complete contrast to the camp at Femø, which I had visited last year.

The camp was about five kilometres from the harbour and main town of Sejerø. Women already at the camp were waiting to give us lifts to the campsite when we came off the ferry. We piled into a volkswagen, trying to catch a glimpse of the island from behind our lumpy rucksacks as we drove back. The conversation went something like this:

"Well, there weren't too many of us on the ferry, were there?" (We had heard that the camp was going to be terribly overcrowded.)

(With a hollow laugh) "Just wait until you see how many are already at the camp!"

"And is it true that there's *no* structure? I mean—who cooks, or empties the shit, or whatever?"

"If you feel like it, you do it."

I subsided into an uneasy silence. I had been working all year as a teacher. I was tired of giving orders and organising, but I suppose that one part of me had become used to the security that structure and routine give. I was sceptical. I was weary. I did not want to worry about if I would be fed, and who by. I wanted a firm footing of regular order to comfort me.

When we arrived there were 200 women on a camp planned for 60. At the first

J P GOODCHILD

Body workshop—'communicating through movement, touch and sound'

common meeting, the Danish women who remained on the camp explained that there were no fixed duties but that women could volunteer to cook for the whole camp in the evening. There was a food-buying collective, and we should write up on a list in the kitchen-tent any items that were needed. If women saw that anything needed doing, they should find others to help them and take care of it. They also said no groups or meetings were organised, but that any woman could call a meeting (big or small) or organise a group.

The next day a notice board appeared, and various groups did start. Some women were willing to teach their language: Italian, French and Danish lessons began. There was a body workshop, which involved women communicating through movement, touch and sound, but without using words. There was a massage workshop and a meditation group. There were some music workshops where women exchanged songs, and informal sessions where women sang, improvised and wrote songs.

There were occasional attempts to discuss in a large common meeting what was happening in lesbian communities in different countries: for example we talked about the brutal attacks on women outside the South London Women's disco, and how they could be countered. These large meetings proved difficult because of the number of women trying to take part and the need for frequent translation so that everyone could follow. Perhaps more important was that they sparked off smaller informal conversations about lesbian/feminist politics.

After a few days there, my feelings of anxiety and irritation with the way it was run began to subside. I realised that this was a place with no committees, paid administrators or mothers to look after us and smooth our way. The camp was, quite simply, what we made of it. The Danish women had set up a camp-site but didn't consider it their duty to look after us.

I was in a small tent with about eight other women. One night we decided to cook, and combined with some Italian women from another tent. But our choice of menu was unfortunate: spaghetti and vegetable sauce. The sauce preparation was fine, but we hadn't realised that it takes a large pot of water nearly an hour to boil on a small gas burner. As the water came slowly, so slowly to the boil, our tempers rose also. The atmosphere became steamy and tense: the blue kitchen-tent was packed with women looking hopefully at the big pots. At long last the water boiled and great mounds of spaghetti were put in. In a flash the women formed a queue and we started serving.

It was here that we began to have a communications breakdown among the cooks. I was serving carrot salad, and saw to my dismay that one of the Italian women was giving everyone massive platefuls of spaghetti. It was going to run out. I tried to tell her, but she understood very little English:

"A little, a little!" I yelled, "*poco spaghetti*!" Five minutes later it was all gone and there were still 150 women waiting for food. So more pots of water were boiled, and more, and more . . .

Food and shit became minor obsessions in the first few days of camp. In the daytime women looked after their own cooking, and particularly when it was raining outside, the kitchen-tent was filled with the smell of damp hair, coffee or chocolate, or frying food. Many ingenious ways were found to cook bread and cheese, those two staples of camping life.

The toilets were a problem and a source of endless interest. They were plastic, portable ones, in the wash-house. There were no doors, and some women never mastered the art of taking a shit while someone else was brushing her teeth or washing her body three feet away. To begin with I found myself using ruses to get the wash-house to myself. I avoided peak hours (before and after breakfast). If I walked over and someone was there, I'd steer off for a short walk or busily wash my hands instead. But I soon decided this was stupid. We all do it! Having a shit is just another bodily function that is generally enjoyable.

Although I did some cooking and clearing up, and took part in some meetings, most days were spent in a lazy, restful way. It was an opportunity to get in touch with myself—my own ideas, hopes, spirit, after the constant struggle of city life. On hot days I went to the beach and lay in the sun, or swam in the cool water. The beach was covered in smooth pastel rocks, and the water thick with dark luxurious seaweed that stroked your legs and breasts as you swam.

It was good to experience night, and the night-sky, for I feel that in London, where I live, night never falls completely. On Sejerø it was possible to lie back and see the stars dusting the deep black sky.

So: I felt myself opened up in many ways, aware of nature and natural rhythms, and also open to difficult questions. I felt far closer to laughing and crying. I know that what allowed me to open up, to be more aware of myself, was, quite simply, the complete absence of men. Women in a large group without men are very different from women in men's company. I was amazed at all the laughter and games there were on Sejerø. Women played football and volleyball. In the evenings there was always singing and joking by candle- and firelight. One night a Dutch woman played accordion, and the women jumped up in pairs, threes, fours and big circles, dancing to waltzes and tangos.

At times I felt lonely at camp: everyone else seemed to be having a good time, but I felt I hadn't achieved much 'success' in making new friends. When I talked to other women afterwards I found I was not a solitary case. I think the anarchist organisation of the camp worked against those who find it hard to take the initiative in social situations. Perhaps on weeks where there were fewer women, and a common language was spoken, the problem was less evident. As it was, I made close friendships with a couple of women, then felt sad and a bit isolated when they left. With some elementary rotation of tasks, I might have got to know a greater cross-section of women through working with them.

On the other hand, it was made clear to us that if we wanted to impose a more regular rotation of tasks, we could: the fact that so many of us would secretly have liked a more structured organisation but didn't bring it up at a common meeting, or suggest other ways of running the camp, shows our unfamiliarity as women with tackling an unsatisfactory group situation and changing it.

My feelings about the way the camp was run are very mixed. When I left I felt I had learned to 'let go' a little and not always demand a fixed organisation. I was glad to have tried to live in a more anarchist set-up, and felt it had given me fresh thoughts about ways women might live and grow together.□

Israeli Women's Party

In the recent elections, Israel's Women's Party got 6,000 votes, not enough to get them into Parliament. Ex-MP Marcia Freedman, who campaigned for the Party, tells Manuela Lombardo about feminism in Israel. But first Elana Ehrlich gives us some historical background.

'Free contraception! Free abortion!'

The structure of Israeli society evolved from the conflict between Zionists and the indigenous Arab people. There are essentially three different cultural groups in Israel—European Jewish, Oriental Jewish and Arab. The Middle Eastern conflict and the small size of the Jewish population meant that Jewish women had to be consciously mobilised into the country's economic and political life. Once Israel was founded in 1948, mass immigration of Jews from Arab countries changed the nature of the Israeli population. Now about half the Jews there are of Oriental origin. Their more traditional patriarchal family structure was quite similar to that of Arab societies, though the move to Israel caused some of these values to disintegrate. Most of Israel's working class originate from the Oriental Jewish community. Israel also includes a minority of Arabs, who make up 15% of the population—about 20% of them Christian and 80% Moslem and other.

A source of confusion about women's position in Israel comes from seeing it as the land of the kibbutz. Only 3.8% of Israelis actually live in kibbutzim, and even within them women's equality is a problem—they tend to mainly do service work and childcare. Men don't do 'women's work'.

Unlike some countries where women's situation has improved, in Israel it's got worse. Because of the intended equality of the past, most women believe their position is better than that of women in Western countries, and so there's less consciousness of the need for struggle.

The Jewish nature of the Israeli state has meant a tendency to press Jewish religious laws. There is no separation between state and religion; for example, there's no civic marriage or divorce, and a Jewish woman's children from an adulterous relationship are not allowed to marry in Israel.

Nationalism has combined with religious pressures to maintain women's traditional place in the family and to increase the birthrate as part of 'internal' security. The new Israeli government elected in May 1977, a coalition of the nationalist 'Likud' Party and the National Religious Party, encourages this role. Not surprisingly a minimal abortion law passed last session is already under attack by the Prime Minister, Beigin.

Over the last two years, a campaign started for a liberal abortion law. Though abortion was legal only where the woman's life was in danger, wealthy women could usually get one illegally. Opposition to the demand for easier and safer abortion came from religious, nationalist and medical circles.

After Beigin's recent statement and a court decision to stop a woman having an abortion because her husband objected, feminists are on the alert again. The movement has also drawn attention to rape and the way women reporting it are treated. Street theatre groups perform in Jerusalem, there are regular cafe meetings for women in Tel Aviv and a social sciences study group in Haifa. A feminist journal called *Todo-ah (Consciousness)* appears occasionally and recently an anthology was produced of articles translated from feminist literature abroad.

This year a Women's Party actually ran in the elections, a move which seems impossible within the British system. Existing parties are supported and financed by the state, so each MP has a budget for political purposes. Deciding not to stand for re-election in 1977, Marcia Freedman suggested that her government grant of about half a million Israeli pounds (£20,000) be used instead to promote a Women's Party.

Some feminists raised the question of the difference between a women's liberation movement and a women's political party. Was it possible to go into parliament on a feminist platform alone? How would a candidate vote on non-feminist issues, in particular on matters related to the post-1967 occupied territories, the Palestinian question? Those in favour of a woman's party thought the publicity would be useful for agitation and consciousness raising, whether or not a candidate was successful. As some feminists did not agree with parliamentary politics, it was decided at a general meeting of the women's movement that the movement as a whole could not reconstitute itself as a parliamentary party.

Among the women who did form the Women's Party were both non-aligned feminists and members of revolutionary anti-Zionist groups who opposed voting for any of the existing parties. The 5-6000 votes the Party received were not enough to get a candidate into Parliament.

Manuela: *When did a Women's Liberation Movement start in Israel?*
Marcia: It began in the winter 1970/71 at Haifa University, where women students started meeting to read and discuss some of the feminist literature filtered into Israel from abroad. Today there are about 1000 women on the movement's mailing list among whom a few hundred activists with branches in major cities—Jerusalem, Tel Aviv, Haifa and Beersheva. Communication among the groups has been difficult and what I am telling you is only about my experience and the Women's Party.
What is women's situation in Israel?
They spend most of their time and energy as housewives, mothers and wives. Only 30% of women between the ages of 14-65 work outside their home. They are concentrated in traditionally female fields (teaching, nursing, social work). The average salary of women workers is 43% less than that of men. In industry women are paid less, even for identical work. In party politics there are very few women.
What is the feminist movement's attitude to the war?
The Women's Party supported any initiative that would lead to a solution of the Israel-Arab conflict—a solution which includes recognition of the rights of the Palestinians to self-determination, and assurance of the secure existence of the state of Israel. Arab women inside and outside the state of Israel are partners in the joint struggle for equal rights and equal opportunities, and we look forward to the day when we can join hands across the political borders.
Are women treated as equals in the army?
Even there women are discriminated against; the army's attitude is that military activity is a male prerogative and that women can only take over administrative service jobs, freeing men for more important things. By law women are drafted into the army at 18 but only 60% of them go into it because exemptions are granted

automatically to women who are married or who object to military service on religious grounds. The only positive thing about the army is that women are trained to be physically strong, and in fact the young generation is much tougher than the previous one, and knows how to defend itself against assault.

What about birth control and abortion?

For religious reasons only 50% of women use birth control methods. There are 45,000 illegal abortions each year (according to the 'conservative' estimate of the Health Ministry) bringing at least 90,000,000 Israeli pounds, untaxed, to several doctors. Our movement tries to organise women's health centres in touch with pro-abortion gynaecologists so that a woman can quickly find a doctor to perform the operation, and we will agree with those doctors a fixed fair price.

You came here from America didn't you—how does women's situation compare?

I come from New Jersey and I was a lecturer in Philosophy at university. I came here in '67 after the six day war and the first impression I had about my social life was something like the 'deja vu'. When I became known as a feminist in Parliament, people thought I was a monster. They were most surprised when they found I was serious politically. Still, I think the defeat of the Women's Party taught us that we need to start as a small feminist group in touch with other feminist groups in the country. We have to start at the base and get ordinary women into the movement, because without their support we cannot fight. Women here live like American women in the '50s. Nevertheless I think that things are moving towards a women's awareness of our exploitation and I am confident in the future of the movement in this country. I ask our sisters from Britain and all over the world to send us information about their movement and to support us in our most difficult struggle.□

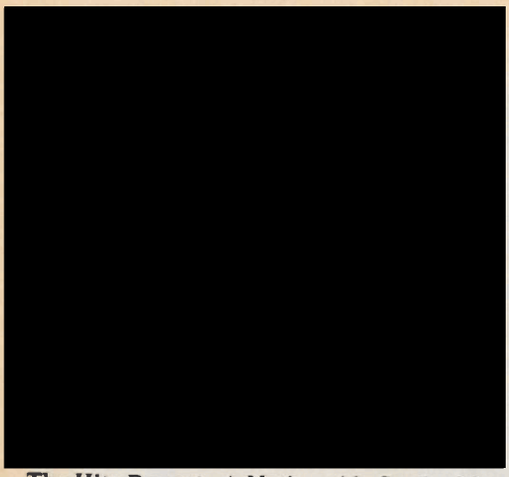
Marcia Freedman first entered parliamentary politics in the December '73 elections as a candidate in the 'Citizens Rights' Party. It got three seats, perhaps as a protest vote, due to disillusionment with the established parties in the aftermath of the October '73 war.

After the elections, a coalition was formed with Luba Eliav who supported partial Israeli withdrawal from occupied territories and the establishment of a Palestinian state alongside Israel. This issue split the coalition and Marcia went with Luba Eliav, calling themselves the 'Independent Socialist Movement'.

Within the Israeli Parliament (Knesset) Marcia was active on feminist questions including abortion and battered women. She attended the International Tribunal of Crimes Against Women, with another woman sent as the official representative of the Israeli women's movement.

Contact Jerusalem Women's Liberation, Jerusalem PO Box 9258.

COMING SOON: Article about Palestinian women in camps in the Lebanon.



Talking with Shere Hite

The Hite Report—A Nationwide Study Of Female Sexuality brings together the replies of over 3000 women to a questionnaire by an American feminist, Shere Hite.

The book was published here at the end of September (out in paperback next March). It has sold over two million copies in America and has so far been translated into nine languages. Although it's been publicised and sold as a 'sex book' in predictably sensational fashion, it does contain lots of new information about how women feel about themselves sexually and how our bodies respond. The women's own statements are powerful testimonies to the myths and misconceptions most of us have been brought up with. But the book's structure—lists of anonymous quotes—makes it hard to picture any woman's sexuality as a whole, or to read it continuously.

Eleanor Stephens talked to Shere Hite about her work.

What made you do this project?

The immediate impetus was my involvement in the Women's Movement in New York where I've lived for years. I had just left graduate school and had worked on and off as a waitress and model—I did a TV commercial that NOW (National Organisation for Women) boycotted, that's how I first got involved in Women's Liberation. It was an ad for typewriters saying that the typewriter was so smart that the secretary didn't have to be—I featured as the dumb blonde secretary!

Soon after that—around 1971—Masters and Johnson's second book came out and in our women's group we discussed how far it reflected what we felt about our sexuality. We all had a lot of trouble talking about the taboo subject at all—we felt shy and kept changing the subject. So to help the discussion, I wrote down a bunch of questions and distributed them to friends and other women's groups so we could use the answers as some starting point. I didn't really expect women to bother to answer them but they did and their answers were real eye-openers to me. I found myself very involved in the material and the women themselves, I thought about it day and night. Friends also agreed this was an important, neglected part of our lives and experiences and so I decided to try to spread the questionnaires more widely, to reach women outside the Movement and then put together a pamphlet. That first questionnaire was revised four times (all versions are published in the Report) because of comments and criticism. For example, lesbian women felt the questions on homosexuality were more like afterthoughts so we changed that. My own consciousness was changed in the process of doing the work—it's been very exciting for me.

Were you able to reach a wide range of women?

I certainly tried to: the women's ages range from fourteen to seventy eight and they cover a variety of occupations, as you can see in the book. Initially we mailed out to Women's Liberation groups, then placed ads in lots of magazines including *Brides* and *Oui* and dozens of church newsletters.

What struck you as the most important point that emerged from all your replies?

The main single fact that came out—and what I really want to get across to all women—is that most women do not have orgasms through intercourse per se—by which I mean penetration of the penis, followed by thrusting. We've all been

The Report...

'Why did you answer this questionnaire?

'I answered this questionnaire because I think the time is long overdue for women to speak out about their own feelings about sex.

How some women have orgasms during intercourse.

'I can have orgasm on penetration after a lot of clitoral stimulation, but I have to really press against the guy and even then it is really hard and usually one of those orgasms that never really makes it and just kind of fades away.'

'Do you ever fake orgasms?'

'I used to, when my husband had a complex about sex and a marriage counsellor told me I should build up his ego.'

'I never fake orgasm. I am angry with other women who do, because then men can tell me that I am incapable sexually, because I do not have vaginal climaxes, and other women they have slept with do.'

'Yes, I always fake orgasms. It just seems polite. Why be rude?'

'Do you enjoy masturbating?'

'It's a way of exploring one's sexuality without the self-consciousness of having anyone there.'

'Masturbation is important for women who are taught to rely on men for sexual satisfaction and who are taught our bodies are ugly and mysterious. And that's just about *all* of us!'

Feelings about cunnilingus (oral stimulation of woman's genitals).

'A tongue offers gentleness and precision and wetness and is the perfect organ for contact. And besides it produces sensational orgasms.'

'I'm afraid I smell. I also feel that I *must* come when so much attention is paid to my doing just that—and that pressures me, and I don't feel free enough to come.'

'It seems more intimate than the sex act. It's as close as one can get physically with each other.'

About lesbian sexuality.

'Lesbian sex is very different from sex with men. It is not an "exchange" or a "trade" or services, it is not physically awkward, it is not something done *to* me (despite the best will in the world men still made me feel I was being acted *on* . . . I enjoy what I do to her as much as what she does to me.

'What do you think of the sexual revolution?'

'What "sexual revolution"? I am struggling in a feminist revolution! The so-called sexual revolution, from my point of view, did nothing to liberate women or men. Men got a screw for free and it was done out in the open and under the liberal/radical guise of a revolution against antiquated sex attitudes. Men still maintain the top position on the job market, in women's magazine stories, in bed, and in the mind of the female psyche. So really the sexual revolution advertised something I already knew. Women are treated as objects. Only in this "revolution" the oppressed didn't gain a thing. The oppressor began the 'sexual revolution' through rock music, the cosmetic market, Hugh Hefner, etc, but we weren't liberated from our roles, only more objectified. It also backfired on the patriarchy, by leading (indirectly) to the women's movement.'

brought up to believe that's how it's supposed to happen and so women feel there's something wrong with them if it doesn't. Yet it's simply a lie, a patriarchal myth. In this study, from the 3,000 women who replied, only 30% could orgasm regularly through intercourse, and most of those had very specific ways of getting enough stimulation of the clitoris during penetration—like being on top and rubbing against their lover's pubic area. Women who masturbate on their stomachs, rubbing against a pillow, say, can do this quite easily, whereas women who need their legs and thighs pressed tightly together to reach orgasm find this difficult or impossible to do during intercourse. Of course there's no reason why orgasm should be considered the goal of intercourse—women can have orgasms in lots of different ways and penetration can be enjoyable for other reasons.

The important message in the book is that the way sex has been defined for us is basically sexist and it's a historical—a political—definition, not a biological necessity. There's no reason other than patriarchal tradition based on reproduction why we should continue to define sexual relations as 'foreplay' followed by intercourse ending with male orgasm. This was a historical idea put into law three thousand years ago—that only heterosexual intercourse be socially acceptable—and it's about time we redefine this and get rid of these models which are so oppressive to women. I'm not at all advocating the 'anything goes—sex is groovy' attitudes of the 1960s Sexual Liberation movement. As the Report shows, that also put pressures on women. None should feel they have to have sex if they don't want it, nor should sex centre on orgasm. I'm sure you agree with that but it's worth repeating—women must be free to explore their sexuality for themselves.

The Report has lots of detail about masturbation, doesn't it?

Yes, because this is a way in which women can find out about their sexuality and enjoy their own bodies. But although many women said they enjoyed it physically (82% of the women did masturbate and of those 92% always reached orgasm—far more than through intercourse) very many women felt bad psychologically because of all the prejudice and taboos against women masturbating. It's considered acceptable for women to be sexual, even to enjoy sex, provided we're fulfilling our role of giving pleasure to men. Anything else—masturbation or homosexuality—is not allowable, so naturally women feel guilty about it. I hope that reading about other women's feelings will help overcome this.

Do you think your findings apply to other than American women?

Yes, I do. The book's been translated into Japanese and I went over there to talk to women about it. They said that their basic problems and causes for celebration were the same as ours: most women knew how to have orgasms if they wanted and to masturbate to orgasm, and were not at all the frigid, dysfunctional little creatures that are usually depicted. The basic problem there, as here, is the way sex is defined and that intercourse alone just doesn't provide the kind of stimulation most women need. Incidentally, the Japanese women were very surprised to read that American women faked orgasms. They expected that we'd be much tougher and tell our lovers right away if something was wrong. That shows their stereotypes about us!

You must have made a lot of money from the book.

Yes, although I borrowed a huge amount to fund the research and I've only just paid that back. I'm putting the profits from this into my next project, which is a similar study of male sexuality. I've already got the questionnaire completed and it will take me two or three years to collect the results and publish them.□

PARENTS: YOU MAY NOT WANT YOUR CHILDREN TO READ THESE PAGES *Woman's Own*

THE REPORT THAT SHOCKED AMERICA *Sun*

SHOULD BE RENAMED THE HATE REPORT *Jilly Cooper, Sunday Times*

...what the papers said

IS THIS BOOK A REVOLUTION OR IS IT SHERE SENSATION *Evening Standard*

RIGHT ON, SISTERS

SHAMELESS HUSSIES

The blonde who's so frank *Sun*

The effect has been to intimidate every man she's met *Daily Mail*

Hordes of bra-less hairy-legged ladies . . . brandishing vibrators & shrieking for vengeance *Jilly Cooper*

Oh, the glutinous, self-deluding, narcissistic sentimentality of our American sisters . . . shoving vibrators up themselves (sic) and engaging in freeform liberated sexuality when they could . . . be out on the barricades for equal pay *Angela Carter, Observer*

Bitterness . . . active women's libbers . . . a fortune in the bank . . . *Michael Freedland, Woman's Own*

IT CANT HAPPEN HERE

Many of the girls featured in the Hite Report are those aggressive New York females who are probably the most unromantic, unfeminine, most screwed-up and sex-starved women you could care to come across. *Tuppy Owens, sex manual publisher, letter to the Evening Standard*

Why do American women want to dominate so much? Is it because originally they went pioneering with their men . . . and have always felt themselves to be more equal because of it? Or being such a young nation, are they still clamorously searching for their identity? *Jilly Cooper*

LOVE OR MONEY

It's only fair to warn you that the hundreds of quotations are presented in a pretty women's lib context; I don't go along, for example, with Shere's conviction that much of all this is due to women's economic suppression. I'd think simple ignorance was much more likely *Katherine Whitehorn, Observer*

Ms Hite falls into the trap of regarding women as if their being resided primarily in their sexuality. As if the world were well lost for a non-sexist orgasm when the economic power that makes it go round remains securely clenched in the, on the whole, negligent and incompetent hands of men *Angela Carter, Observer*

MAN AT BAY

I'd like to keep the commercial American handling of matters delicate to the heart and crotch out of Britain, and what I'd like to say to British men who have had doubts about themselves sown by the Hite Report is: Don't change, we love you as you are. *Tuppy Owens*

If women go on haranguing men, they'll emasculate them. As Erica Jong pointed out, we lost more men to homosexuality than we ever did in two world wars. Or as my husband, having read the book and flung it across the room, pointed out, he can now understand why the retreat from Mons took place. *Jilly Cooper*

Ms Hite is not suggesting a complete ban on sexual intercourse—simply that it is not the be-all and end-all of human sexual relations and that with a little more imagination and communication both male and female sexuality can expand and develop.

And there is certainly no harm in the woman taking the initiative toward change. *Liz Gill, Evening Standard.*

How much have women been allowed to know about this hidden part of themselves? For centuries there was a conspiracy of silence.

When women were in labour in the seventeenth century, their attendants delivered them under heavy cloths, having to fumble to bring the baby safely into the world.

The risk to the baby's and mother's life of working in total darkness was preferable to the 'risk' of exposing a woman's body to sight.

Don't dismiss this as ancient history. Even in this enlightened Twentieth Century, battles have been fought—mostly by men—in an attempt to keep hidden from women the truth about their own bodies.

In 1918, a dancer named Maud Adams lost a celebrated libel action because it was discovered, under cross-examination, that she knew the meaning of the word clitoris.

The male lawyer and the judge were horrified that any decent woman should know of such a thing . . .

Sadly, many women have seen the Masters and Johnson report as a goal to set themselves, and worry because they don't have the intense multiple orgasms the book described.

But this is not, as some people might suggest, a danger of too much knowledge. It is rather the effect of not enough.

We need to know more about what ordinary women feel. What they do when they make love, what makes them happy, what frustrates them.

The Hite Report is another significant step towards providing some of the answers. *Claire Rayner, Sun*

In this most private of areas, untouched as yet by Sex Discrimination Acts, women clearly feel themselves dependent and insecure, still unable to believe that they can truly exist, psychologically or economically, without a man. So their overwhelming desire, in intercourse, is to bind the man more closely to them, either as a touchstone for their own identity or a vital meal ticket or something between the two . . .

Are there more interesting possibilities than trying rather obsessionally to fit, as it were, a square peg into a round hole? Intercourse is basically the mechanism of reproduction and it is not surprising, therefore, that only the male ejaculation has been selected as vital. Today, though, reproduction is very low on the list of human necessities and the survival of the species would only require a woman to have intercourse perhaps ten times in her life.

So what about all that left-over sex drive? What is it for? Nothing, it appears, but shared pleasure and the expression of love, and if one half of the human race finds straight intercourse relatively unsatisfactory, perhaps it is time it was toppled from its absolutely central male-monopolised pedestal. *Jill Tweedie, Guardian*

continued from last month

She drove out to the site of the new resettlement camp. It was a twenty mile ride along a road which led to nowhere in particular. She walked the barren land, saw the grey shale which covered the surface of the earth so that only small stunted cactus and tiny, tough rock plants grew there. No preparations were being made for the sudden influx of 6,000 people, the spot was deserted, there was no life there at all.

She began to write letters, call meetings. The Minister said the township would have all modern amenities, it would have schools, community centres, flush toilets, work. She formed a small committee; one of its members called it Auntie Jean's action group; they wrote again; what assurance could the Minister give that people would not be moved before such amenities were available? Everyone knew his promises were ludicrous. The different government departments never met, so could not even formulate a coherent plan. The Water Board said it was unlikely there would be water on the site for at least ten years, when various enormous and expensive irrigation projects were completed. The City Council was hoping to get rid of 6,000 people to ease the burden of unemployment in the city, not caring what would happen to the families that were moved. She was part of this struggle. She had fought for her own home. She knew what it meant to be threatened like this.

It was increasingly difficult to ignore the view from her window. Working for a charitable organisation, she visited an old man who received from them a little extra on his pension, a ration of dehydrated soup and mealie meal. It had been raining and the yard outside his house was full of muddy puddles. She picked her way through the dirt to his front door, which leaned precariously open. He lay on the ground in that damp house, coughing from bronchitis, covered in sacks. It amazed her that he answered her list of questions courteously.

When a visitor to the town praised its charm and beauty, she answered, "You should visit the other side. You should see the location."

She began to make connections between the way she lived and the poverty across the valley. She was asked to speak at a local girls' school. The older girls sat in a big hall, ranged in front of her. She perched informally on the table which had been set up for her, hoping to break the distance between herself and them, not wanting to use her age as a weapon. It was the first time she had spoken in public and she was very nervous. She had spent some time on what she wanted to say and she read each word of what she had prepared. She wanted to make sure that the girls would understand their own complicity in the poverty that edged all their lives. She spoke about the way she saw the rich and poor as connected. "When we truly wish to make a better world, we have to admit these connections," she said. She said that the girls must realise that it was not their own merit, nor that of their parents, that had made their education possible, but that they were at this expensive school precisely because one out of every four babies died in the location. She had wanted to push them into action, but she had not been prepared for the anger and hostility which exploded when she finished. Girls sprang up from all over the hall, they said that black people were stupid and lazy and dirty and had themselves to blame for their own poverty. They drank too much and had too many children. No one asked what she could do to change things. As she prepared to leave, one girl apologised to her privately, "You see," she said, "you attacked us personally." Later she heard that she would not be allowed to speak again at the school. The girls had been so upset that night that there was an uproar in the dormitories.

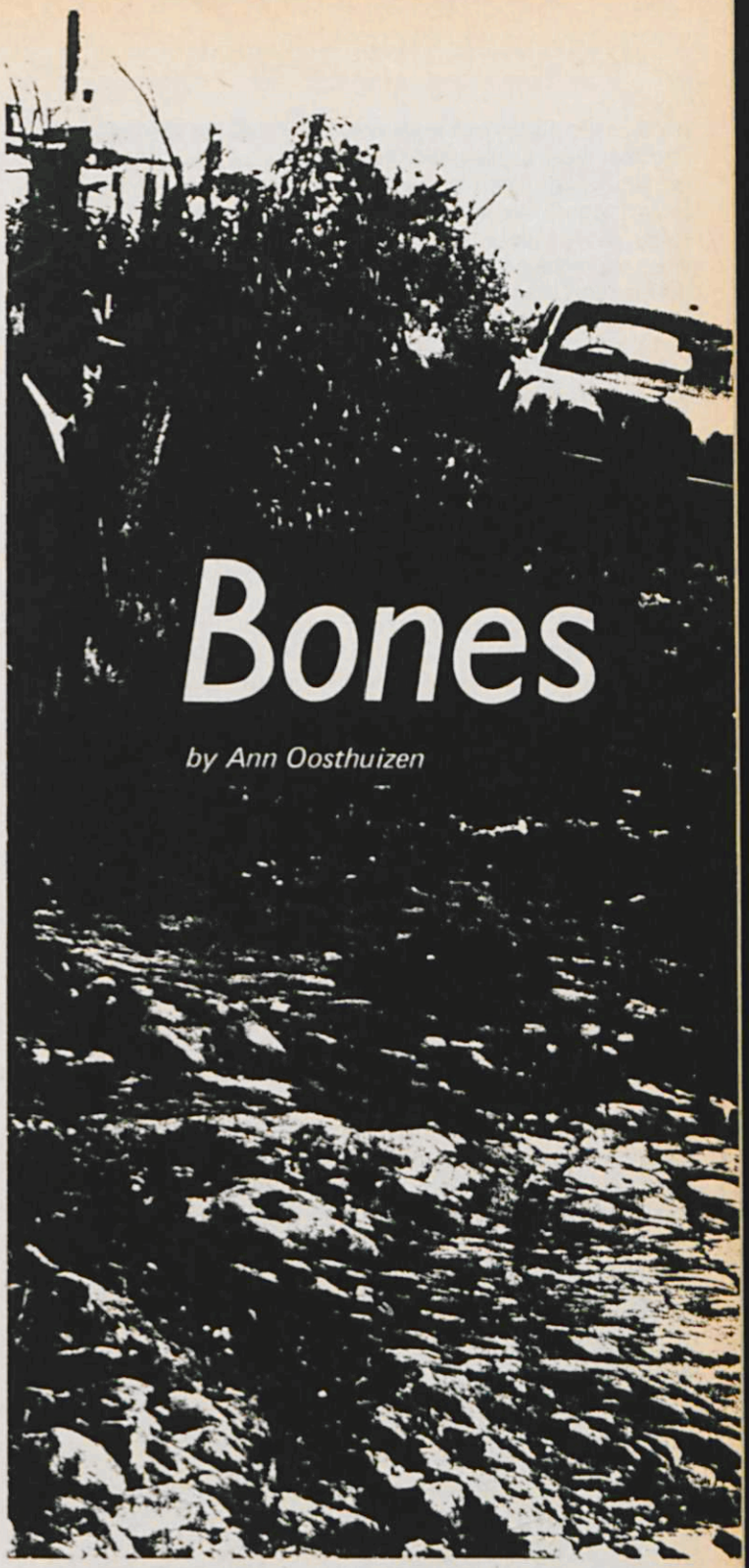
There was no one to talk with. Stephen's friends were embarrassed if she spent too much time with them. She was a single woman now and might mistake friendship for something more. Their wives talked endlessly about their husbands and children, making her uncomfortable. She felt isolated by their structured lives. She was invited to 'family' picnics with the children, rather than to the adult social occasions where the men sat and talked together while their wives made the tea. When she had been hostess at Stephen's parties, her opinion was respected by his friends. Now she was considered too abrasive, too extreme. Perhaps she was becoming so.

She and the house were like a whale beached on the shore, dying. She longed for tenderness, for a strong arm to hold her, comfort her and take her burden from her. Her body ached with loneliness. There is a special pain we feel after a loss which catches us in the centre of our body, making us double up in agony over the emptiness inside us. She was not allowed to reveal her need. And the house made no sense any more. It contradicted all the beliefs she now held. She made plans to leave it. She both loved and hated each treasured object. She still cut roses for the blue and white patterned vase, still oiled and rubbed the golden wood, satin with age, but the house no longer represented who she was. It stood for the past, its opulence combined both comfort and culture, yet she knew that its quiet good taste was only the reverse side to poverty. It was the harvest gathered by her white colonial ancestors from that arid hillside which she saw from the height of her bedroom window, a hillside criss-crossed with paths made by the feet of all those underpaid and underfed generations who shared a common colonial history with her. As she stood at her window staring at the dip in the hill where the ground was ash grey, the town rubbish dump, she could see grey figures scrabbling in the smoking ash for anything worth using. One hundred years ago, the angry tribes had come over that hill, daring under the leadership of a great general to pit their spears against the British guns. She had been taught that their defeat was a victory for civilisation, had seen the monument erected to the white woman who braved the savage Impis to bring gunpowder to beleaguered white soldiers. She felt angry and cheated that her whole life had been so rotten with lies. Her home was beautiful, beyond anything she had seen elsewhere, but it was a lie. It was a monument to oppression, there was no beauty here. She must go away. If she came back she would do so under another flag.

At what moment did she say goodbye to the vision of life which had defined her until this time? An image of sequence surprised her; it gave her a new direction, changed the pattern.

She could see herself sitting in the window of the farmhouse in which she had grown up. The view was tremendous; close by were the flower-beds and lawns round the house, on the left the road led to the river which was flanked by tall poplars and scrubby thorn trees, and in the distance the vast Karroo mountains were solid blue against the open sky. It had been to a different Jean, another self that she had said her most painful goodbye. Looking for the Jean who had existed before her marriage, before she had taken on the roles of wife, mother, caretaker, she had gone back to the place where she had spent her childhood. She had needed to understand a time when she had been herself alone, a time before she had become an addition to Stephen's life.

Her fingers clutched the imaginary bones; find the pattern, evoke the moment. Jeremy was with her. They had gone to say goodbye. The journey to the farm had taken three hours and she was tired, too tired to climb the river cliff as she had always done on such visits, her body incapable of the effort. She sat at the window and looked out on the landscape of her childhood; this was the place where she had wandered alone along the dry river bed, walked between tall rocks, climbed to the eagle's nest. This was where she had sat stalking turtles in the muddy water,



Bones

by Ann Oosthuizen

where she had run from a cobra curled silently under the piece of tin which covered the old well, all that was left of a windmill which had been swept away in a flood before she was born. She had loved each tree, each crevice, unconscious of how much she had loved because she had had no sense of her own consciousness. Who was that Jean? She could not see herself, yet remembered clearly each stone and tree, each warm smell. She felt the sunlight on her brown skin, the sudden pain of a thorn in her bare foot. When she searched for herself she found only feelings, sensations, visions, not a child who was aware that she was growing into a woman. The farm was stocked with Victorian and Edwardian love stories, yet the child who read avidly the romantic literature of the past never saw herself in the mystical role of Woman. She had been unconscious of any destiny for herself, accepted a society in which she would play no major part. The child, who had read about and admired the bravery of others, never saw herself as a heroine. That child had become servant, slave, lieutenant, never Goddess. This was no wonder, thought the seeker, when she was the child sitting quietly in the sun, letting others shape her life.

She looked back on her two selves meeting, child and woman, the bones rattled. This was the woman emerging, saying goodbye to the child, looking over the great gulf of her marriage to that other self, feeling pain at her lost childhood. Her life was beginning to take on a value in her own mind that she had never before accorded it.

She asked Jeremy to play on his flute. She looked through the window at white-winged egrets flying against the blue mountain. Would she ever know a mountain as intimately as she had known this one, she had seen it in sunset and sunrise, cloud and sun, had climbed it so many times. Closer to the house, the river cliff rose dark grey beyond the huge poplars under which she and Jeremy had played, each in a different childhood. It was over. There was no going back.

She had come closer to tears at that moment than at any other time. At home, dry-eyed though frightened, she packed up, emptied cupboards, organised the removals. She knew clearly what she was losing, feared the blankness of the time ahead, yet the inevitability of her actions seemed mirrored in all the events of that time. The destruction of their home, begun at Stephen's death, continued. It was clear that her leaving had been a flight from death and yet it was itself a death. She was leaving the past, both her own and Stephen's, and stepping into a future which would be different from anything she had ever known. Pain, oh yes, there was pain. Nothing was easy.

Jean, searching again for the right image, fitting and rejecting the pieces, fumbling through confusions, prepared for her own blindness, her own sentimentality, wanting to cut through all this to find that truth which would set her free, found herself thinking of that time as if she were a diver who remembers how, when he has spent too long underwater, he breaks the surface with a painful gasp. A child must know that moment too in her first breath of air, which is also a cry. She felt suddenly an overwhelming surge of gratitude to those who had let her go. For she knew that each time she had moved away from the life to which she had been bred, the anger of the community grew. The more they pushed her away from them, away from safety, said openly that her widowhood was a disgrace to Stephen, the closer she came to that primal shout. She was not the only one who had seen herself as the caretaker and guardian of Stephen's property and now she was being condemned for dereliction of duty. Perhaps that is why in some countries widows are encouraged to burn themselves on the corpses of their husbands. Being themselves so long possessions, part of the furniture of a man's life, it is no wonder that when faced with the responsibility of wealth, they endanger that wealth. They cannot forget those who have been made hungry by the flux of the rich. Allowed to live without husbands, they are free to question the very foundations of society. Nothing is sacred to the outsider.

Looking at herself from this distance, she no longer felt pain when she remembered uneasy evenings in comfortable sitting rooms where her married friends had entertained her. She could see herself, alone, facing them from an overstuffed armchair, while they arranged themselves before her in family groups, the parents festooned with dogs and children. They were, she now realised, marshalling the forces of their homes against her. At the time she had felt like a waif, window-shopping on cold winter evenings, longing to be asked in to those brightly-lit interiors with their warm fires and happy, united families. She knew that a wall of glass would always stand between her and their domestic scene, but she did not understand how her longing to share their love undermined their smiling patronage and turned their friendship into deadly battle.

Beginning for the first time to rattle the bones with joy,

she thanked all those friends who had hated her absolutism. Had they been kinder, had they found her a place where her confusions could have been contained, where she and Jeremy would feel less lonely, she might have been tempted to dismiss her ideas as personal arrogance and settle for what nurturance the community provided. But there was nothing soft about this community. It had not reached the level of racial cruelty on which it was built by being kind and it was certainly not able to transcend itself by being kind to her. She had after all been daily reminded that she did not suffer alone. Her chronicle continued, sometimes pulled, sometimes pushed, sometimes taking a few blind steps of her own, she moved away.

"Jean, do you live *here*?" Suzie's voice cut into her life. The black theatre group were her guests as she had been theirs, yet now, visiting her, they were seeing her in relation to her home, a white woman in a social frame, and they taunted her deliberately. They turned up her record player, the noise of music blaring out over the quiet suburban lawns, they teased Jeremy about his membership of the ruling class. Yet they were her friends, closer to her than the words they spoke, compromising themselves even by their friendship with her. John sat in her kitchen, his hand round the brandy bottle, his way lost in the early hours of the morning, "Jean, why did we come?" Their friendship had brought them, yet that friendship was something they could not afford; because she was white, they needed to go their own way without her. Paradoxically they gave her life integrity while at the same time hurting her with their rejection of her offer of comradeship. Yet unlike the community to which she belonged, they gave her support. Because they too were set on a road which they already knew would lead to suffering, and certainly was no easy way, they reached momentarily towards her; "It's all right," said Zac as he held her when they said goodbye, "You will leave here, it will soon be over."

She heard the knock through veils of sleep and knew what it was even before she got up to answer it. This had never happened before, yet she knew it, that early morning knock, heard down the ages, symbol of tyranny through fear. She leaned out of the upstairs window. At the door stood four men, only one in police uniform, they said they had a warrant to search her house. When she opened the door, they thrust a paper into her hand, but the typewritten words made no sense. Jeremy was up too, standing with her as she walked with them into the gracious sitting room.

Like the thieves they opened drawers, spilling out their contents in untidy efficiency, leaving her to pack up after them. She hovered beside them, apologetic, explaining her life. Those photographs of the African township were for an exhibition in the Cathedral, had already been shown publicly, were quite legal. Without a word they moved impassively away and up the stairs into her bedroom. Her bed was rumpled, her clothes scattered as she had removed them sleepily the night before, the privacy of her life was being invaded by those official eyes. Her panties lay on the floor, the last garment she had kicked off before jumping into bed. The uniformed officer looked at them with an expression of disgust. Must she apologise for her sex as well? She could still see them now, locked in her memory, her soiled panties, the curl of his lip. Her mind clicked shut like a guillotine.

It was enough. She would be their accomplice no longer. She refused to be a witness to their judgement of her. She would do her own judging. She left them, Jeremy stayed at their request. Accompanied by one policeman, she made herself cup after cup of coffee in the kitchen, never offering him any, showing no sign that he was there. He stood reading her gay kitchen noticeboard, sighing, moving from one leg to the other. Older than the rest, he seemed uneasy at the discourtesy of their visit, he sighed, "Mrs Craig . . ." he began, in a sentence heavy with apology. She cut him short with a glance, moved away into her own silence.

Eventually it was over; she and Jeremy drank coffee and read the Sunday papers before anyone else in the street had stirred. They could not go back to bed. The house felt defiled. Four men had been able to enter their home, unlock cupboards, empty out each drawer, touch anything they liked, read the titles on the hundreds of books which Stephen had so carefully collected. The house seemed smaller, less safe, even less of a place to feel at peace. Much later Jeremy told her that he had never again slept soundly on a Saturday night. If they were to look for a haven, they had not found it here. This was no safe place. She knew that pollution was everywhere, in the ground they walked on, the air they breathed, the love they offered each other. "Hurry," she cried to her other self, throwing the bones, suddenly afraid that she would not be able to escape. "Hurry, there is so much ahead, and you may die there, you could die there. Hurry! Hurry!"

She could see herself; a small figure standing in the wind on a huge sand-dune, gazing out to sea. The oil-tankers looked like toy ships on the horizon. She could see how her body was becoming crumpled from the pain, how the deepening lines on her pale face showed anxiety, anger, loneliness. On that vast beach, she found her loneliness more bearable. This huge primeval space was indifferent to her presence. No rock or bird seemed to mind that she was there. It was acceptance of a kind.

It was the third winter after Stephen's death that she finally broke away. In spite of the cold nights, the days were windless, the sun, shining from a clear sky, warmed up white walls and the thick, matted grass. She sat in the garden, the contents of the cellar spread out around her on the lawn; old magazines, garden tools, broken tricycles, a child's blackboard, two lawnmowers, boxes of old 78 records, a trunk full of documents and letters, old clothes in suitcases, a stretcher, even a commode. These were things they had not been able to cram into the house, yet had thought might some day come in useful, or that were part of a past they had not wanted to throw away. It was natural that she should start here when clearing out the house.

She was thorough, she scrutinised each object with only one criterion in mind; everything that had belonged to Stephen would be stored, what had belonged to her would be thrown away. She would not take responsibility for destroying any except her own possessions, yet her rebellion said that it would not be she who would come back for Stephen's things. She knew that when she had clung to the security which these possessions had given her, she had shut away her deepest emotions.

Squinting into the sunlight, she read through old letters, letters written to Stephen by herself, by someone called Jean, who had an untidy, breathless style, who was persistently cheerful, who assumed a bland understanding of the world. She felt totally separate from this person, preferring Stephen's tortuous romantic style to this letter-writer's trivia. Was this person really herself? She felt a rush of pity for this frightened, childish girl, and an anger, even as she tore up her own letters, keeping his, for Stephen's poor understanding of his relationship with her, his unconscious oppression of a mind which he never saw as separate from his own. Or even had much respect for. Had he? Was she being unfair? Anger, and guilt at this anger, boiled under her efficient exterior, the hands ever busy sorting, destroying, and always in such a way that she could be sure it was only herself she was erasing. Why did she do this? What instinct for self-destruction, what desire for a fresh start, what revulsion from a self who had been so pale, so without definition, content to allow another to guide her, judge her? Certainly this

destruction of herself, coupled as it was with a scrupulous attention to each small object that had belonged to Stephen, was an act of aggression against him. She gave him his definition of himself, guarded it conscientiously, but she used the anger that she suddenly felt to wipe out all traces of the self who had lived so long in his shadow. Deliberately setting herself up, and for the first time, as neither daughter, wife or even mother, she cut off all links with the past, determined to carry nothing with her into her new life. She would this time make sure that what emerged was Jean, if there was anything there at all.

Looking at herself from a distance, Jean was amazed to recognise the anger. Even the scrupulous way she had fulfilled her obligations as caretaker, ensuring that she would not, could not be reproached for lack of respect for Stephen's memory, even this was part of the anger that ripped up letter after letter in her own childish scrawl.

Yes, her every action was an accusation. She was stripping herself of her past, negating seventeen years of marriage, was saying in effect that the Jean who had lived through that was not worth keeping, that she had been deluded, misunderstood, maimed. Was there self-pity in her anger? It was difficult to assess that. But how could she accuse Stephen? If there was guilt it was shared equally between them. Besides it was part of a pattern of life that she herself had only recognised when she no longer belonged to it. She had suddenly found herself out in the open, it was cold and lonely, but she was beginning to smell the scent of freedom on the wind. Her anger gave her the strength to cleanse herself, so that she could start her journey alone.

Musing over the bones, Jean remembered again that small wind-battered room in the resettlement camp, where she had not mourned, sister with sister. Although she had understood that pain and loneliness, sharing it, she had been held back by a weight of custom that had seemed to her obligatory. At last she was making her own rules. The child sitting alone in the dry river bed had never dreamed that she had a right to make demands on the world she lived in, and when she had grown up she had taken it for granted that her life would have no purpose of its own, that it waited to be transformed by the love of a man, whom she would then serve and follow in all things. She smiled, nothing works out exactly as we dream it, yet it was nevertheless true that she had believed this myth implicitly; it was as inevitable a truth to her as the sun rising or the turn of the seasons.

And it was certainly a great anger which had made her challenge her different identities, and claim a life of her own. Yet it was also true, she now saw, looking dispassionately at herself, not living each raw moment in blind experience, but standing back and seeing herself as from another world, that her sex wove a pattern through her life, linking all her separate selves together. Through her womanhood her life made sense; hers was not an isolated anguish. She had been nurtured to accept her place without rebellion. Throughout the world women were taught like her to serve and suffer. Although she was still alone, she was at last breaking free from the mould which had kept her from reaching out to those who suffered as she did.

The house was up for sale. As she pored over the pile of stored and broken objects, a woman buyer stood on the veranda above. She knew, having walked over the house, how much work there was to do, how each cupboard and bookshelf would be crammed with forgotten treasures, each one with its own dilemma, each one demanding a different solution. "You will never manage to finish!" joked the spectator sympathetically. It took Jean three months. It was three months of dying.

She sold nothing which was his, kept nothing which was hers. Her life had shipwrecked on Stephen's death. Now she gathered those things which were his and stored them with friends. She would no longer stand in front of a house, crammed full with possessions, to defend it from the hungry and homeless. She had left empty-handed, with nothing but these bones to put against the future. It was no wonder that they haunted her.

When she had packed up everything and moved all the furniture out, she cleaned the rooms meticulously, washing down the paintwork and the walls. Because there was no bed to sleep in, she lived for the last week with friends, returning each day to the house. The time came to say goodbye.

It was a still, warm winter's morning. Unimpeded by furniture or curtains, the sun shone in the rooms like a benediction. Unlike other empty houses that she had walked through, damp, grey houses with torn wallpaper and dirty cellars, this house was like a huge air-filled bubble, the golden floors and white walls smiled at her. She sat on the lawn in the sun, the house rising behind her, the garden spread out before her. This was her last moment as Mrs Jean Craig. For both her and the house the future was uncertain. They had shared joy and now parted.

She had barely survived. The seeker looked at her with pity. Jean was exhausted, her clothes hung over her thin body, her skin was dry and scaly. It had been a long journey from that first death to this other death. Then she had needed all the remnants of Stephen's life to affirm her existence. Now they stood in her way. The bones she was holding were divested of flesh, smooth and well-worn by her own hands. Her hands, which had begun by holding on, had learned to throw away and were coming to terms with their own emptiness, linking her instead to a world of people she had at that time never met. The bitterness of these memories was all that held her back. She must learn to throw the bones away as well.□

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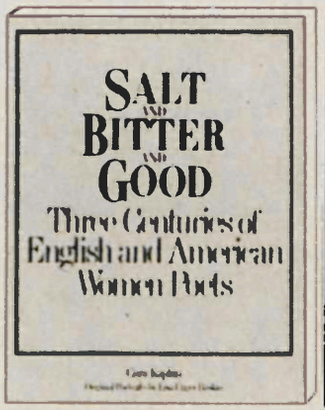

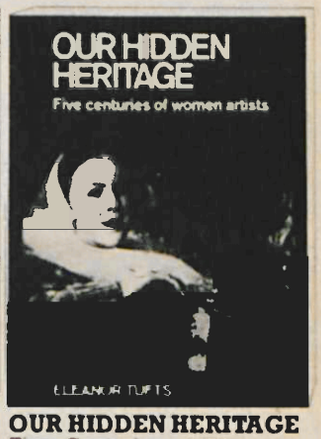

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SHORTLIST

TALKS & CONFERENCES

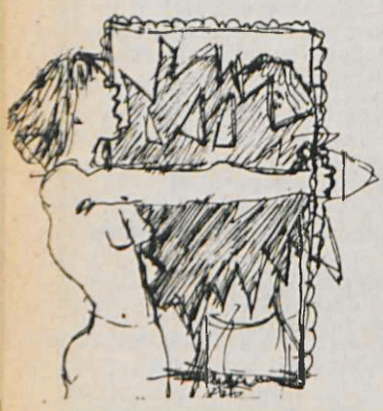
Female Sexual Meanings
21 October. 7.30 talk at the Women's Research & Resources Centre (WRRC), 27 Clerkenwell Close, London EC1 (01-253 7568). Speaker: Annabel Farraday Essex University).

NALGAY
21 October. 7.30 meeting at the London Campaign For Homosexual Equality (CHE) office, 22 Gt Windmill St, London W1. Open to all gay women and men in NALGO. Details from Alan (01-737 4591).

Scottish Women's Liberation Conference
22 October. 4.00 planning meeting at 9 Fleming Place, St Andrews. Due to lack of resources in Dundee, the conference is now planned for December in St Andrews.

Women Political Scientists
22 October. Meeting of the PSA women's group at the Poly of Central London, New Cavendish St, W1, to decide on a programme of action to combat sexism in recruitment, promotion, teaching and research into politics. Details from V Randall (01-486 5811 x 6423).

We Are Not Mad, We're Angry
22/23 October. Conference on women and mental health at the Camden Women's Centre, Rosslyn Lodge, Lyndhurst Rd, London NW3. Topics: can therapy be revolutionary, consciousness raising, psychiatric labels, causes of stress & our own self images. Creche, entertainment. Register soon. Fee: £2.50 (£1.50 students, claimants). Forms from Women & Mental Health c/o Archway Women's Centre, 147 Archway Rd, London N6.



Women In Manual Trades
22/23 October. From 1.00 (lunch together) second national meeting at 16 Sholebroke Avenue, Leeds 7. Subjects: fighting sexism at work, working in the unions, future of the group, self images, alternative vs conventional work situations. Floorspace for accommodation, and food provided. Inform the organisers if you're going and if you need creche facilities: Tess McMahon (0532-629427 evenings). There might be some spare seats left in the mini-bus going up from London. Contact Ginny, 23 Bridge Ave Mansions, Bridge Ave, London W6.

Midlands Regional Women's Liberaton Conference
22/23 October. At Queen's Drive Community Centre, Queen's Drive, Nottingham, combining discussion with skill sharing (silk screening, leaflet printing, street theatre, writing songs, making films). Creche, social. Ideas and offers of help to Nottingham Women's Group, 8 Elm Ave, Nottingham (0602-53597).

Relationships: Love, Sex
24 October. 6.30-8.00 discussion for girls at school, at Camden Women's Centre, as above. 'What is love? Being in love? Why do women get married? How are legal rights affected when you get married?'

Oral History And The Great War
29 October. 10.00-6.00 at the London School of Economics, Houghton St, London WC2. The sessions from 1.30-3.30 deal with women at war. Speakers: Jill Liddington on Textile Workers In Wartime and Deborah Thom on The Woolwich Arsenal. Register by sending £1 to Anne Summers, 1 Rose Lane, Oxford (0685-721178).

What Is Feminist History?
28 October. 7.30 Feminist History Group discussion at the WRRC, as above. Speakers: Rebecca O'Rourke and Charmian Kenner. Also on **11 November.**

Women & Violence
31 October. 6.30-8.00 discussion for girls at school, at Camden Women's Centre, as above. 'Why do men batter their wives? What does the law say about rape? Women's self-defence.'

CHE Women Out Of CHE
5 November. 10.00 Conference at Queen's Walk Community Centre, Queen's Drive, Nottingham, "to discuss the aims and objectives of the 'National Organisation for Gay Women'." Register in advance. Details from Notts 46881 Mon & Thurs 7.00-10.00; suggestions to Nikki Henriques, 22 Highbury Pk, N5.

Women & Children
7 November. 6.30-8.00 discussion for girls at school at Camden Women's Centre, as above. 'Why do women have children? What help is available? What rights do children have?'

What Is Feminist History
11 November. As on **28 October.**

A3 Wednesday Group poster

Women At School And Work
14 November. 6.30-8.00 discussion for girls at school, at Camden Women's Centre, as above. 'How are girls educated? Why do so few women get the best jobs? What legal rights do women have at school and work?'

Women In The Salvation Army
18 November. 7.30 at the WRRC as above. Speaker: Marion Ward.

CAMPAIGNS

Abortion

22 October. Midday 'a stunt' in Piccadilly, Manchester, to draw attention to the national demonstration in Birmingham (see below). Details from Manchester National Abortion Campaign (NAC), Terry Conway, 8 Phillips Park Rd, Whitefield, Manchester 25.

22 October. 7.30 Islington NAC benefit disco at the Hemingford Arms, Hemingford Rd, London N1. Mixed.

29 October. NAC demonstration. 1.30 in Victoria Square, Birmingham and march to rally outside Birmingham Women's Hospital. Slogans: No restrictive laws—women's choice not doctor's choice, NHS abortion—every woman's right, out-patient abortion clinics now. There will be a NAC train from London. Return tickets £4. Assemble at Euston 10.30. Contact NAC, 30 Camden Rd, London N1 (01-485 4303).

12 November. Yorkshire Region NAC conference to discuss positive legislation. They want to involve trade unionists, women in and outside the women's liberation movement, and anyone interested in developing the abortion campaign. Details from Jane (0742-669048) or from Sheffield NAC c/o Women's Centre, 52 Langsett Rd, Sheffield.

The Co-ordination Committee In Defence Of The 1967 Abortion Act is made up of 16 organisations including the Family Planning Association, the National Council For Civil Liberties, The Abortion Law Reform Association. 'Members back up pro-abortion MPs and influence parliamentary opinion; they also picket the DHSS. If you belong to an organisation which could add its voice to the co-ordination committee contact Jane Roe, 27-35 Mortimer St, London W1.

Rape

12 November. Torchlight women only midnight demonstration in the Chapeltown area of Leeds, organised by the local Revolutionary Feminist Group on the themes: every woman has the right to walk alone at night without fear, and fight rape. They hope women in other towns will do the same on that night in order to attract publicity.

PROJECTS

Homeworkers
'I percieve homeworking as a prime example of the situation of exploitation women can find themselves in.' Anybody involved in research on homework, or homeworkers who want to assist with some research work contact Nicola Colston, 23 Alkham Rd, London N16.

Lesbian Line
The new telephone information and advice service run by women for women (see *SR 63*) is now operating: Mon and Fri 2pm-10pm on 01-794 2942.

New Year's Conference
Any Hertfordshire Women's Liberation Group interested in organising a regional New Year's conference/workshops/party contact Brenda, 4 Grove Mead, Hatfield, Herts (30-64389).

Sick of Calendar Cuties?
'Order your feminist/activist 78 calendar now. It was screenprinted with tender love and care at the workshop, 81 Lenthall Rd, London E8.' £1.50 incl. postage.

Corrections
The contact address given in *SR 62* for Women In Construction & Manual Trades was wrong. It is 21 Bouverie Rd, London N16.

The contact numbers for the Older Women's Group are definitely: Zelda (01-405 9242 day or 607 4323 evening).

ART

A Litany For Women Artists
6 November. 6.00 performance at The Orangerie, Holland Park, W11 of 'a sound-poem, by Hannah O'Shea, for unaccompanied voice, in celebration of the life and work of women artists of the past.' All women welcome. Admission free.

FUN & MUSIC

Words & Music
24-30 October. 7.30 at The Almost Free Theatre, 9 Rupert St, London W1. 'A week of performances and discussions, organised by Music For Socialism, to explore the political meanings of music both with and without lyrics.' Admission 50p per evening, and £2 for an all-week ticket. Details of the programme from Les (01-607 7268).

Women's Music
30 October. 7.30 at the Women's Arts Alliance, 10 Cambridge Terrace Mews, London NW1. First of a series of fortnightly acoustic music events for women to play, sing, listen with each other, and to learn about our own history. This one will be a sing-song; bring your songs and noises.

FILMS

Chicago Maternity Centre
28 October-3 November. 8.45 two films by women at The Other Cinema, Tottenham St, W1. *Chicago Maternity Centre* 'deals with a community centre which has struggled against opposition from high-cost hospital-based care in order to enable women to have their babies at home'. Details from 01-637 9308.

Women's Cinema
In this new season the Women's Cinema have used 'Hollywood' as their framework. 'In doing this, we are illustrating some of the ways in which women have been depicted by the major American film studios. We will be supplementing and contrasting our main features with films made by women.' All the films will be shown at 3.00 in the Clubroom, The Other Cinema, as above. Membership for the season £1 and 60p entrance. Women only.
30 October. *Ziegfield Girl* (1941) with Judy Garland, Hedy Lamar, Lana Turner. Also *Puttin' On The Ritz & High Fidelity* by Antoinette Starkie

13 November. *Queen Christina* (1934) with Greta Garbo and John Gilbert. Also shorts.

PLAYS

Son Of A Gun
Presented by the Sidewalk Theatre Company, it's a play which 'pieces together the events in the story of Brenda Stanton from a nine-year old "maladjusted" schoolgirl in 1957, to her squatting in an empty London house with two other women in 1970.' The play will be followed by a discussion, and there will also be a feminist literature stall, and an information stall run by the local women's group.
19 October. 7.30 at Hinckley Community College, Butt Lane, Hinckley, Leics.
20 October. Nottingham. Watch local press for venue.
21 October. 7.30 at Leicester University.
26-28 October. 8.00 at Strathclyde University Theatre, 126 Ingram St, Glasgow.
31 October. Bournemouth. Watch local press for venue.
1 November. 8.00 Eastleigh Technical College, Eastleigh, Hants.
2 November. 8.00 Southampton College of Art.
3 November. 8.00 Shoreham Youth Arts Workshop, The Barn, St Julian's Lane, Shoreham by Sea, Sussex.
4 November. 8.00 Tower Arts Centre, Romsey Rd, Winchester, Hants.

♦♦♦♦♦♦

Kiss & Kill and Floor Show
Two new plays by Monstrous Regiment: *Kiss & Kill*, which looks at domestic violence, its origins and 'flashpoints', and *Floor Show*, a musical cabaret about the contradictions surrounding the world of women at work.
21 October. 8.00 *Floorshow* at Ladbroke House, N London Poly, Highbury Grove, London N5.
22 October. 8.00 *Floorshow* at Sth Bank Poly Students Union, Rotary St, London SE1.
28/29 October. 7.30 *Kiss & Kill* at Blackfriars Arts Centre, Boston, Lincs.
31 October. 8.00 *Floorshow* at Marco's Social Club, Grantham, Lincs.
10-12 November. *Floorshow* at South Hill Park Arts Centre, Bracknell, Bucks.
15-20 November. Both shows touring round Manchester. Details from Rosemary Heesom (061-833 9471).

♦♦♦♦♦♦

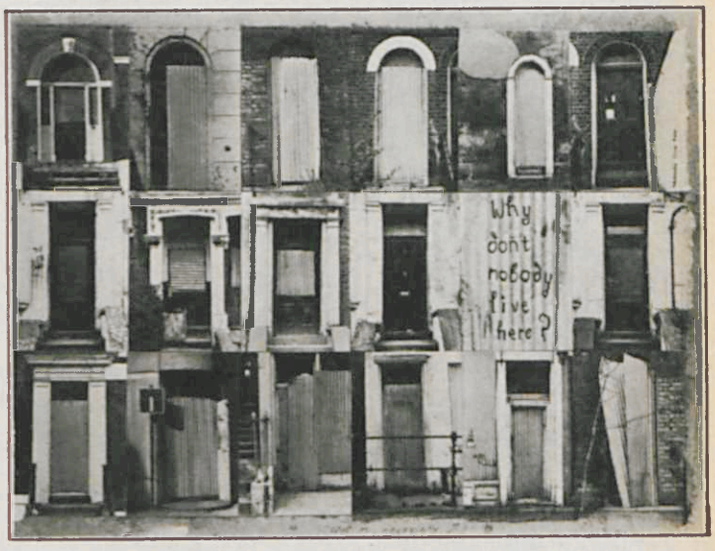
Care & Control
Gay Sweatshop's play about women who are forced into fighting for custody of their children.
27 October. 8.00 at Plymouth Arts Centre.
28/29 October. 7.30 at Bristol Arts Centre.
31 October. 7.30 at Colchester University.

CENTRES

Oaklands, Wales
12 November. A jumble sale in London to raise funds for Oaklands, the Women's Centre in Wales. Any one with 'nice jumble' contact Brigit (01-348 7375) or Cordelia (01-444 7029). They can collect it.

Leicester
Now has no women's centre but the Women's Liberation Group can be contacted at 79 Laurel Rd.

Lewisham
At 74 Deptford High St, London SE8. Open Tues & Thurs 11.00-4.00. They've just started a pregnancy testing service and have meetings every Wed 8.00. They are also planning a weekend of events for **22/23 October.** Contact Sue (01-691 1602) for details.



A3 Wednesday Group posters are sold to part-fund a sheltered housing project for adolescents. Available from photogalleries, left bookshops and Sally Greenhill, 357 Liverpool Rd, London N1, at 30p + postage.

reviews

books

SITA
by Kate Millett
(Virago paperback £1.95
and hardback £6.95)

In *Sexual Politics* Kate Millett looked at novels written by men and drew out what she saw as their cultural assumptions about love and women embedded in the structure of plot and language. Against the sensuous prose of Genet, the flamboyance of Miller and Mailer, she pitted her own passionate, authoritative, academic language.

In *Flying*, this kind of language breaks up as Millett tackles not a thesis but a journal-notebook, attempting to look beyond herself at the events of months in America and England, using the confessional form sanctioned by the women's movement to catch her own responses at every moment. Sentences are looser, traditional syntax shaken up by the frequent omission of verbs and pronouns. The balance of her earlier prose is replaced by an urgent rhythm.

Sita, published six years after *Sexual Politics*, shows the early preoccupations with love, women and literature intensified. But now the focus is narrower. An entire notebook-journal is devoted to charting Millett's love affair with a woman called Sita, and its unhappy ending. In fact the focus of the book is less Sita than Millett herself, her every doubt, agony and perception passionately detailed.

Sita is ten years older than Millett, ensconced in a life she has constructed for herself after three marriages: California, university job, politics, family house for herself and her grown-up children and her grandchildren. Millett, determined to hang on despite the warning signals and to force the affair to continue, longs at the same time for her own life of bums, slums, bohemians and art in the Bowery district of New York. She sums up the difference in their approach to life by seeing them typified in geography, the split between country and city integral to much fiction since the nineteenth century: 'You stick with town, the Big Apple, where it all happens . . . or you follow a will-of-the-wisp and decide on sunny California.'

It is the two women's respective allegiances to work and self-fulfilment in widely separated places which constantly pull them apart and finally defeat them, I think. Millett recognises this when she says: 'We would live together . . . refuge and asylum and all settled. Until I failed her, or it seems I did, by taking a new loft in New York for a few months of the year.' Yet, because she states continually that it is passionate love which gives meaning to life, she also denies her former analysis and states that things are going tragically wrong simply because 'love has failed us, failed us both . . . it wore out, it died somewhere, that fine aroma, that intoxication.'

The emphasis in *Sexual Politics* was on love as male-controlled, as constraining women. In *Flying*, we see Millett struggling with the conflicts of bisexuality, loving her husband Fumio and loving several women as well. In *Sita*, Millett is honest in recognising that, like many of us, she wants everything—in her case, love and security with Sita in California, and freedom, solitude and work in New York. But she doesn't question this tug between commitment and freedom very much, seeing them as completely mutually opposed. She concentrates on her notions of love instead. This, which already in *Flying* is equated with feasting and wine, is in *Sita* both the very stuff of life and at the same time curiously insubstantial: 'A love affair is all those evenings and the light of candles and the talk and the wine and her eyes suddenly at the end of a sentence.'

This honesty, and then the retreat from it, characterises the book. Sita is both the impossibly perfect many-sided object, and at the same time the devious chameleon monster crashing off the pedestal. And out of Millett's Catholic childhood comes the image to express the contradiction: 'When she took me and entered me, I wept and I said, the joke only a pretence for its utter earnestness—my Innocenza, d'you realise you're my religion. But she had no idea what I meant. Maybe that was the beginning of the end, for we quarrelled the whole time.'

Sita represents, I think, Millett's very personal triumph in reconciling women, love and literature. She copes with her enormous suffering, her grief at the loss of passionate satisfying sex, by abandoning herself to pain in order to conquer it: 'Okay, I'll give up working on the old manuscript, just teach, and work on the fool notebook I carry round with me . . . I'll stay with it, with what I'm doing now. I'll make it an experiment, see if I can record life as we live it, the moments ticking away in the house (in California). This love affair dying. Slowly, slowly, like a diseased plant . . . Better this . . . than going back to New York and the emptiness, the loneliness.'

If her splits cannot be healed in life, then at least they will be healed on paper, through literature: '(The notebook) has become my friend, solace, obsession. I will live in it, in the ability to record experience which makes me more than its victim . . . Magical transformation of pain into substance, meaning, something of my own.' We see the notebook becoming a safer companion than Sita and finally turning into Millett's raison d'etre: 'Do I stay because I am a writer and this is something to write about? . . . To have it and record it? Even if that is in some way immoral or wrong or sick, one makes choices and I choose this suffering because at least it is feeling, at least in the vast anomie of my life now lost, now vacant, at least I am driven to put down 30 or 40 words in consecutive order and this is the last grasp on sanity or usefulness, hope, or the notion of a future.'

Millett's motto 'I feel therefore I am' perhaps ignores other aspects of identity such as work, but it does tie in with the need that many of us have to use journals to keep painful experience at bay, to look at it and to use it. She herself refers to the women she meets who are keeping journals as a way of finding their own voices for the first time. But I feel that Millett takes it to extremes; once things with Sita begin to improve, she feels she should 'throw the notebook away . . . quit it. Junk the whole project. Whatever end it served no longer exists. Yet the pity of leaving it, dumping it. Another abandoned manuscript . . . If I stop this journal, is that a sign of coming to rest? . . . To live merely for living. And then what do you do with your life?' By now, 'life' means 'journal'. The painful time with Sita appears to be ending. Millett stops the journal, returns to New York, and awaits Sita's visit, planning to get on with other books about events beyond herself. Then a telephone call from Sita announces a new lover, a man, who will give her all the security Millett cannot. The affair is over. And Millett's journal can be completed, *ie* a book on the affair produced.

This irony is at the heart of *Sita*, and present in Millet's work since *Flying*. Perhaps this last journal represents a necessary resting-place before Millett goes on to the other books she speaks of writing. For me, it represents a problem. Millett can say whatever she likes about Sita, because of the

KATE MILLETT
her new novel . . .
'SITA'
£1.95 (+ 30p P&P)

'SEXUAL POLITICS'
new British edition
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'truth-telling' confessional form she has chosen—we don't know what's been left out—in opposition to a novel, where the author's selection and arrangement of material is clearly recognised.

As an artist, she chooses sculpture and painting as a way of transforming the environment she perceives. As a diarist, she can extend this into total power over what happens to her. As a famous woman whose autobiographical work is published, she has the power that other woman diarists do not: to demand that the world hears only her version of events. While I envy this, I think that in Millett's case it is dangerously seductive, leading her further into a world bounded only by the self that loves romantically and possessively and rather than confront this, plunges into it in order to write a diary proclaiming it as the truth. This seems to me to be going away from the *Sexual Politics* project and the feminist project of speaking personally in order to recognise more clearly where we stand in the world and how to change it.

Michele Roberts

OF WOMAN BORN
Motherhood as Experience and Institution
by Adrienne Rich
(Virago paperback £2.50 and hardback £7.50)

I am not a mother and normally would shy away from reading, let alone reviewing, a book subtitled 'Motherhood as Experience and Institution'. My love of Adrienne Rich's poetry and my knowledge of the book's reception in the USA persuaded me to read it. Upon reading, I found that Adrienne was, in fact, talking about areas of experience which are very relevant to my life as a woman in this society: we are all daughters and experience 'mothering' in one form or another. In addition to our direct experiences, and often contradictory to them, we are also confronted with our culture's concepts of what motherhood ought to be and thereby of what womanhood is.

This book covers a huge area of interconnected material; to attempt a simple rundown of content would not do justice to Adrienne's work. Constantly she switches from the general to the specific, from the personal to the objective overview. Her intensely personal narrative of her experiences as a mother contrasts with the well-researched account of how control of our bodies was wrested from us by the growth of the male obstetrical profession. Similarly, her section on 'Mother and Son, Woman and Man' discusses Freud, anthropological evidence, her feelings towards her own sons and the writings of other women with sons along with such observations as:

'The women's movement is still seen in terms of the mother-child relationship: either as a punishment and abandonment of men for past bad behavior, or as a potential healing of men's pains by women, a new form of maternalism, in which . . . (women will) ease men into a more humane and sensitive life.'

This switching from one level of abstraction, from the poetic to the scientific, and back again isn't confusing. I found the way in which one idea flows into another closely resembles how I actually think: although when I'm arguing or writing I only present the rational/scientific part of my thinking, I form my ideas by drawing on all of my experiences. Adrienne sees this division between 'rational' and 'irrational' as being an artificial creation of our patriarchal culture. In her writing I feel that there is a constant and a successful effort to challenge this duality.

She sees as fundamental to this duality the artificial division between 'inner' and 'outer', inside oneself and outside oneself. Freud described it thus: '. . . it is to be either *inside* me or outside me . . . what is bad, what is alien to the ego and what is external are, to begin with, identical'. As the inhabitant of a female body, Adrienne does not feel this division so rigidly. In heterosexual love-making there is a strong sense of 'interpenetration'.

In auto-eroticism, 'the clitoris which is more or less external delivers its throbbing signals to the vagina and all the way into the uterus which cannot be seen or touched.' In lesbian love-making 'the identification with another woman's orgasm as if it were one's own is one of the most intense interpersonal experiences: nothing is either "inside" me or "outside" me at such moments. . . Nor in pregnancy did I experience the embryo as decisively internal in Freud's terms, but rather, as something inside of me, yet becoming hourly and daily more separate.' She sees the rejection of dualism, arising out of women's perceptions of their own bodies and feelings, as a constant undercurrent of feminist thought.

Adrienne begins the chapter on motherhood and daughterhood with a poem by Susan Griffin:

Mother
I write home
I am alone and
give me my body back.

Like Mother, like Daughter. Coloured silhouettes on terylene.

flashback

FABRIC PICTURES by Berta Freistadt
at the Women's Arts Alliance July 19–September

'I did the pieces of work on a year course—embroidery and textile printing at Goldsmiths College. I had no art training but had always done bits of sewing and was familiar with handling fabric . . . I wanted to develop ideas about the women's movement through sewing . . . as a woman I was allowed to sew, which links up to why I chose fabrics to portray women in a political sense. My works are deliberately simple and because I want other women to see it and feel that they can do it too.'

reviews

moving section of the book. Again and again she unravels parts of the complex web of confusion, love, anger, pity, rage and despising which surrounds our relationship with our mothers.

There is a section on 'matriphobia' which is not the fear of one's mother, nor of motherhood, but of becoming one's mother. 'Thousands of daughters see their mothers as having taught a compromise and self-hatred they are struggling to win free of, the one through whom the restrictions and degradations of a female existence were perforce transmitted ... The mother stands for the victim in ourselves, the unfree woman, the martyr. Our personalities seem dangerously to blur and overlap with our mothers; and, in a desperate attempt to know where mother ends and daughter begins, we perform radical surgery.' This desperate attempt is to break free of our conditioning as women, to be free. The radical surgery, which arises out of self-hatred entails not only cutting ourselves off from our mothers but from identification with the experiences and weaknesses of other women. This denial of our common experiences in fact prevents us from seeing the roots of our oppression and keeps us fighting alone.

Adrienne is charting our experiences. *Of Woman Born* is a descriptive book, but description where none has gone before, as in the mother-daughter relationship, is an essential first step towards the understanding and then changing of our experiences. Throughout the book I felt the same awakenings as upon my first encounters with the women's liberation movement. The book is a beginning, both in content and form; she outlines what we should look at and, more importantly, by example shows us the way in which we should look at it.

Brenda Whisker

WE'RE HERE
Conversations with Lesbian Women
by Jules Cassidy and Angela Stewart-Park
(Quartet £1.95)

'So in a way you think being a lesbian is a political action to put yourself outside the thing you are trying to destroy, which is the heterosexual life-style—the assumption that all women are there for men's pleasure and to bear their children?'

This is one of the questions Angela and Jules ask a lesbian they interview, and it pinpoints a problem central to *We're Here*—just how subversive is it to state that as lesbians we exist? The women who agreed to be interviewed and photographed for this interesting book were taking a courageous step. Standing up to be counted at the risk of losing your job or your child is not at all easy—and coming out in the relatively private world of your friends and workmates, though difficult, is not nearly as risky as making it public in print. These lesbians have made major statements of their existence in private and public spheres, and this book is a landmark in this respect. It will provide support and encouragement for other women—the authors obviously hoped to include 'closet' lesbians among their readership.

But if just by being lesbians we pose a challenge, surely we must be able to discern our target more clearly than 'the heterosexual lifestyle'. It is this commitment towards crucial definitions that the book lacks. The authors refer in their questions to patriarchy, capitalism and imperialism, to religion and to family life, but they never press each other, or the women they are questioning, to enlarge upon these matters, or to explore the links between them. They spend their main energy eliciting accounts of childhood, of parents' reactions, relationships and social activities.

One of the reasons definitions are not taken far is that these are not, as subtitled, conversations: they are interviews. Jules and Angela clearly either decided to talk much less than the women they spoke to, or severely edited their own contributions. So these are not the kind of conversations where people explore ideas as they go along. They will remind many lesbians of the kind of chats you have on the first meeting with someone—what did your parents say when you told them? What clubs do you go to? These twelve lesbians have complex ideas on what their lesbianism represents, but the technique of interview and transcript is not effective in giving us an analysis of such ideas.

Presumably Angela and Jules deliberately chose this technique in hopes that it would provide real freshness of testimony. To have each woman

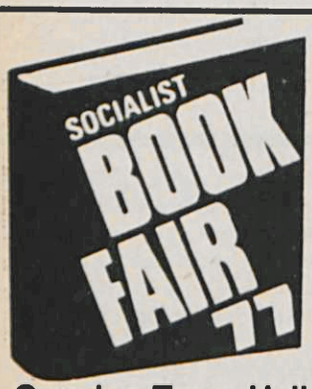
for children

THE LIGHTKEEPERS
by Elizabeth Renier (Hamish Hamilton Antelope Books £1.25)
THE BUTTY BOY
by Jill Paton Walsh (Piccolo 45p)

The Cornish Telegraph of December 31st 1873 reports—'the [Longships] lighthouse was the scene of the heroic exploit of a little girl who was left by herself through her father (the lightkeeper) having been kidnapped and confined by some wreckers when he went on shore to get provisions ... how astonished and exasperated were [the wreckers] when, just after sunset the light gleamed forth over the waters as usual.'

Around this exciting account Elizabeth Renier recreates the life of a small Cornish village—dependent for its livelihood on the sighting of a good shoal of pilchards, and on working the nearby tin mines. While her characters divide into obvious baddies or goodies, the building up of sinister detail as Helen realises what the wreckers are about—causing shipwrecks so that they can loot them—carries the story excitingly along. For 6-9 year olds.

In *The Butty Boy* Harriet, now a young lady courted by an 'eligible' young man, remembers how she ran away at eleven to join



Camden Town Hall
Euston Road
London, NW1
November 3rd 12.30 - 9.00pm

Book Club for Socialists
Selections for 4th quarter 1977 (starts Oct)
List A: **We Shall be All** Laurie Flynn
Worker in a worker's state Miklos Havaszti
John S Clarke Ray Challinor
List B: **How capitalism works** Pierre Jalee
Fontamera Ignazio Silone
List C: **The Suffragettes** Sylvia Pankhurst
List A plus either List B or List C for £4.50 (state preference). Details: Bookmarx Club 265 Seven Sisters Road London N4 2DE Tel 01-802 6145

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at 7.30 Tuesday 25th—Saturday 29th October
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Series of dance classes will be held:
Mon 6.30-8pm Ballet Class (Fergus Early)
Tues 6.30-8pm Dance Improvisation (Emilyn Claid)
Weds 6.30-8pm Women's Creative Workshop (Jackie Lansley)
Thurs 6.30-8pm Beginner's Dance Class (Maedee du Pres)
Fri 10-12 Gymnastic Class (Mary Prestidge)
Fri 6.30-8pm Dance Class (Emilyn Claid)

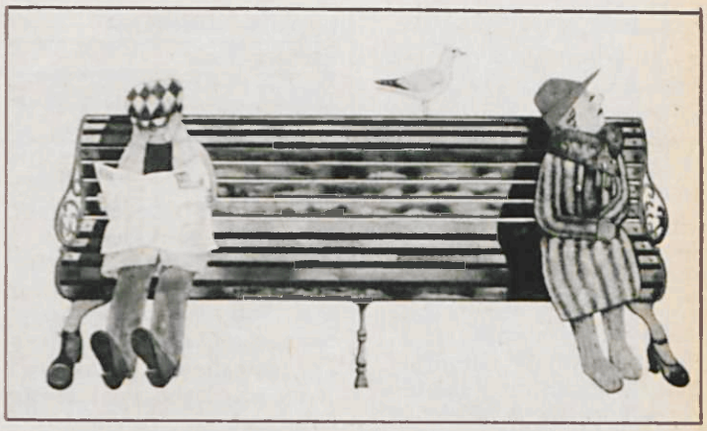
the canal people and work a butty boat carrying coal to a paper mill. This is an excellent and unpretentious little book set in Victorian times. Each character is vividly sketched from 14-year-old Bess who is in charge of the boat to stern but kind Mrs Jebb who soon realises that Harriet is not the servant girl she is pretending to be. Paton Walsh's knowledge about and enthusiasm for canal boats is very evident in her writing as she involves the reader in the detail of working a boat through a lock or in the decorative fixtures of the tiny cabins. There's a nice twist at the end of the story too, when the grown-up Harriet turns down the 'eligible' suitor whose snooty attitude to the canal people of her story effectively burns *his* boats. For 8-12 year olds.

Rosemary Stones (Children's Rights Workshop)

A WALK IN THE PARK
by Anthony Browne (Hamish Hamilton £2.75)

Working-class Smudge and her Dad and mongrel dog meet middle-class Charles and his Mum and pedigree dog in the park. The dogs romp about together and Smudge and Charles follow suit. But the parents ignore each other.

This is an imaginative and non-didactic way to discuss class differences with small children. Both parents are caught in the stereotype of their class which children can easily understand. Reading this book to a group of kids from differing class backgrounds provoked a lively discussion.



Smudge and Charles get on with it with Smudge leading the way. The story ends with Charles picking a flower for Smudge which she takes home—nothing more here than a gift from one friend to another.

This non-sexist picture book suffers a little, however, from the children looking so similar, even characterless. But an amusing feature of this unusual, colourful book is the unexpected surrealist detail on every page, *eg* a dog in a pram and human bench legs. For 3-6 year olds.

Andrew Mann (Children's Rights Workshop)

clarify her political perspective around her lesbianism would certainly have alienated a proportion of the potential readership, those whom, presumably, the authors meant to reassure when they stated in their very first sentence that 'this book is not trying to prove anything'.

And so we are left with a sense of conflict between the pluralism encouraged by the book's format (twelve different models of lesbianism) and the collectivism of its message (we're all oppressed). Our understanding of significant differences between the women is not advanced. The women themselves can't argue it out, and the authors do not choose to take up the issue.

Many lesbians who are looking for a book which doesn't hector them, and gives them plenty of information of a personal and often moving kind about what some lesbians do and feel, will like this book a lot. And many lesbians who suspect that society is only too pleased to see us all as separate individuals, sorting out our little lives as best we can, will say 'so what! What next?' But all its lesbian readers will admire the women who contributed to it, and recognise many facets of their own lives within it. We do need mirrors, but we mustn't linger too long in front of them.

Susan Hemmings

theatre

AS TIME GOES BY
a Gay Sweatshop production
by Noel Grieg and
Drew Griffiths

We find ourselves in a dilemma over this play, for it is primarily written for and about gay men. But because it is one of the first pieces to raise the uneasy relationship between feminism and gay male politics, we feel it to be important.

SHARON SMULLEN

Professor Hirschfield, German researcher into homosexuality, hears news reports of his work.

The first act depicts the contrast between the romantic utopia of writer Edward Carpenter and the stark reality of the exploitation of working class boy prostitutes. Scandal exposes the brothel and we see how the rich clients buy their way out of trouble while the youths are pilloried off-stage. The point is made clear that Oscar Wilde, though himself wealthy, did not escape punishment, since his 'socialism' denied him immunity.

The second act illustrates the growth of a 'legitimised' homosexual identity as entertainment—the Blue Angels of *Cabaret*. All this is set, as in the film, against the menace of rising fascism and incorporates the story of Professor Hirschfield who pressed for homosexual law reform based on thousands of psychoanalytical and sociological case histories he had collected at his Institute for Sexual Science in Berlin. 'Thirty thousand cases *have* to show that we are right. We are standing on the very verge of victory tonight.' However, with the death of Roehm and The Night Of The Long Knives, homosexuals were soon to realise that their lives were no longer safe under fascism. Unable to fight back, those who could afford it escaped, while the others were gassed alongside the Jews and socialists.

reviews

The third act, set in a gay bar in New York's Christopher Street, in the late sixties, is the most provocative part of the play, taking up questions of relationships between liberation movements and the 'new left'. We found it possible to cope with the inherent sexism of the predictable drag theme of earlier acts, because we realised it was central to understanding the gay ethos of earlier times. However, with the historical distance considerably shortened, we felt tense at references to the women's movement, which seemed grafted on to the play, rather than an integrated part of it. 'If anyone calls me sister in the future,' says one of the boys in the bar, reflecting on the growth of his own sister's feminist consciousness, 'I'm going to take it as a compliment.'

There is a particularly poignant reference in the play's epilogue to the origin of the slang term 'faggots', reminding us that the bodies of men who loved each other were tied together and used to kindle the pyres where witches (women who lived without men—ie lesbians) were burnt. Nevertheless, the play does not risk making a clear statement on the relationship between feminism, lesbianism and the gay movement—perhaps this is a great deal to ask at this stage from writers who aim primarily to educate gay men on their own history. This relationship will continue to be a problem as long as camp, drag and 'the gay sensibility' play such a large part in constructing the male gay identity.

The programme chronology concludes: '1969 Nixon elected President. Judy Garland dies. Gay Liberation born.' And these are the kinds of links that left us suspicious. Nevertheless, the play rises well above this level of superficiality, and we felt it to be a comprehensive and ambitious project and a serious attempt to explore an important field.

Melanie Stiassny and Susan Hemmings

Gay Sweatshop on tour with **As Time Goes By,** *dates include:*
26 October: Birmingham University, 2 November: Rotherham Arts Centre, 4 November: Aberdeen, 3-4 December: Chester Arts Centre

QUEEN CHRISTINA
by Pam Gems
(directed by Penny Churns
designed by Di Seymour)

Queen Christina is an ambitious play, sweeping us through the seventeenth century, in the wake of the almost legendary figure of a queen who could never find a way of life that encompassed all her ambitions. The great strength of the core of the play is the way that Pam Gems manages to imbue her heroine with a complexity of pressures—her own internal struggles and the political pressures of the time. In a clipped and incisive opening scene we see the Swedish king inveighing against women's weakness and simultaneously agreeing to bring up his only heir, Christina —a girl—as a boy, to fit her for the throne.

The first half of the play sees Christina as a 'man'—hunting, fighting, bisexual, taking part in military and political decision-making. It is not until her Chancellor and other men at the court begin to worry about the next heir to the throne, that she is brought up against the fact that she is also expected to behave as a submissive woman. She refuses to marry, to accept the suitors offered to her, and abdicates—ensuring the succession by passing the crown on to another member of the Swedish royal family, and still refusing to marry and 'breed'.

The second half takes Christina to Europe, first to Paris, to meet French bourgeois feminists—the 'blue-stockings', women with whom she expects to find common interests, but instead is confused by their hatred of men. She moves on to Italy, sets up house with a handsome, calculating young aristocrat, tries at various times to engage herself in European politics and reaches the second major crisis in her life when she discovers that her lover has been manipulating her. She takes part in his killing and discovers after this 'murder' that she is in some very important way, 'not a man'. She has a breakdown, and then returns to the world after spontaneously rushing to help save the life of a servant's child. Now she realises that there are aspects to being a woman, baking, the 'smell of babies' which she longs for. But her last major act before she dies is to help young Italian republicans to escape from their persecutors. To the end of her life she struggles to encompass possibilities which transcend gender and class identification.

There are two immediate ways in which one could interpret the play. Firstly, that it shows, sympathetically and powerfully that one cannot easily transcend these circumstances. Or secondly, that Christina is a tragic heroine, deprived of the full experience of womanhood. I prefer the first view, since in a number of important ways (despite her rank) she is no more nor less 'tragic' than most men and women whom society forces into rigid gender-moulds. It is that for her the contradictions are sharper and more violent than they would be for most people, precisely because her privileged rank makes it possible for her to make more choices and yet be exploited because she is a woman. Pam Gems is not romanticising monarchy, but using Christina to draw our attention to some very fundamental questions: what is masculinity? What is femininity?

These questions are themselves set in a broader context. Apart from the political roles Christina plays, her dilemmas are also set within the context of developing philosophical ideas. Descartes visits the Swedish court and Christina, avid for ideas (she is fascinated by the prospect that the world may be *round*) discusses free will with him, and what the prospects for choice are between 'the flesh and circumstances'. Christina is a woman faced with certain existential choices, and it is because she is a woman and not a man that they have specifically painful consequences—ie, that if she marries she may be forced into years of dangerous childbirth in order to produce a male heir.

Where there is perhaps a tragic dimension to her is that because she 'lives' as both a man and a woman, she cannot identify fully as either and equally cannot create some totally new self-definition—she is set apart from her companions. This is shown dramatically in the way Christina speaks short soliloquies which express her agony, and visually in her perpetual incongruity. She abdicates in a dress more suitable for a wedding, wears tough leather riding boots under a flimsy nightie, and strides, crop-haired, among prettified ladies.

The play covers half a century. Some of the dialogue has a rapid-fire shorthand quality which produces great emotional intensity, but which at times makes it difficult to follow exactly what is happening, historically and politically. Although on the whole it avoids the history-chronicle play format, sometimes one wishes one had a clearer idea of the relationship between what is actually happening—wars, conflicts—and the tactical task that Christina takes on herself—to try and achieve peace. But these are minor flaws, and it is more important to look beyond them to a play which has broken new theatrical ground in its subject-matter.

Michelene Wandor

Queen Christina is currently at The Other Place, Stratford on Avon, in repertory till Christmas.

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Whilst openly declaring its own sex bias (it was made by a male-dominated team as usual)– *Superman and the Bride* nonetheless gave us a successful forty-minute insight into the world of mass media, via a galaxy of images and extracts from films, television, magazines, newspapers, radio and records. This showed convincingly that a large percentage of our viewing, listening and reading reinforces traditional or 'common sense' views of what is said to constitute male and female behaviour. This is important information if we remember that the average viewer spends some eight years of her/his life in front of a TV set!

During the last few years a growing body of evidence has emerged of the ways in which mass media contributes to people's *misunderstandings* of the social and economic world. We are slowly beginning to realise that the highly developed methods of communication which we daily welcome into our lives do not mediate *neutral* information. On the contrary, they are a form of ideology, with their one-way message system which is steeped in class, sex and race bias, showing only a very partial and limited (and often distorted) view of the world.

One of the major problems facing researchers in publishing evidence of such bias in the media is the matter of copyright. The Copyright Law was instigated to protect authors and to prevent pirating for commercial gain, but it is also a very effective brake on any form of criticism, preventing– as it does–the use of material without permission for a period of fifty years from its creation.

Recent publications by Children's Rights Workshop about children's books have had to resort to *re-drawing* sexist or racist illustrations which demonstrate the points made in the text, as also did Carol Adams and Rae Laurikietis in their book *The Gender Trap– Messages and Images.* Commercial companies when approached have usually withheld permission for the use of their material as soon as they realised the context in which it would be used. So it is particularly to the credit of the research team on *Superman and the Bride* that they have managed to persuade so many different people to waive the copyright laws and allow them to show material which could, after all, be said to put the producers of it in a critical light.

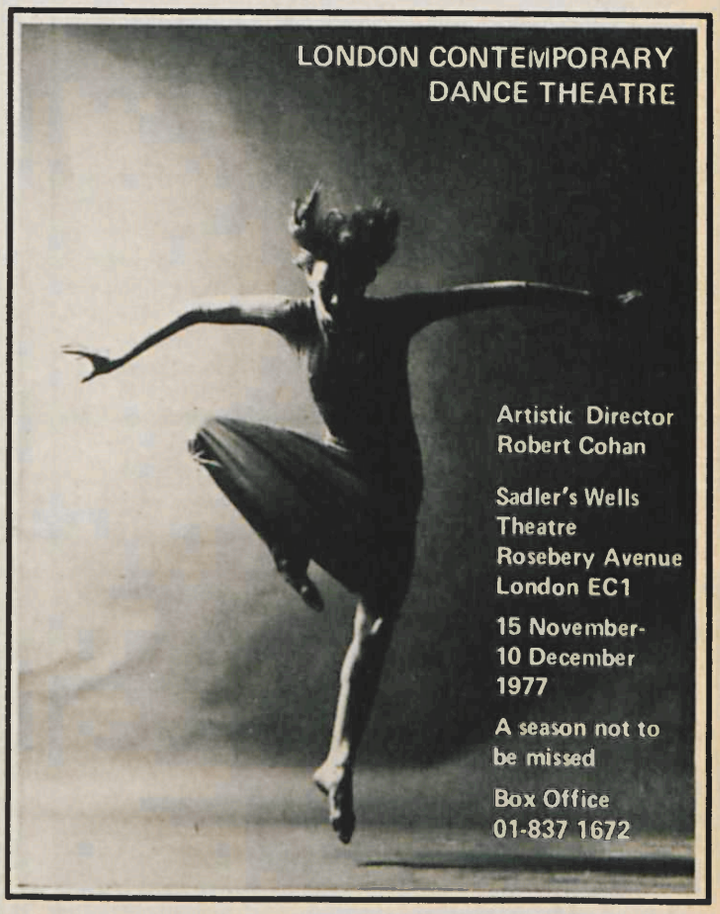
The material so gathered was put to extremely good use with creative editing and writing, and we were able to see the ways in which messages reinforce each other by constant repetition. In a series of cameos, the sex roles were wittily juxtaposed to show how one particular stereotype (that of the sweet, gentle and sexy woman), slots neatly into its counterpart of the smart, tough and decisive man, thus forming the basis for countless stories.

Alternatives were also shown from Chinese and Swedish media, where the image of women is slowly changing, as is the position of women in society itself. Mention was also made of women producing their own books, films and magazines in this country, in an effort to counteract the lies told by the giant monopolies.

A further problem in dealing with ideology is the well-nigh impossible task of introducing the notion from scratch (it is analogous to trying to demonstrate to fish that they swim in water), and that sex role stereotyping is only one small part of all the areas of investigation which are gradually being opened up. Working in a medium which fiercely protects itself with the notion of its own 'neutrality' Thames Television can hardly be blamed for not allowing its production team to transcend their own *class* bias, nor for not throwing off the bonds of constraint imposed by governing bodies. So it is probably better to regard this programme as an appetite whetter, than to be critical of it for what it lacks.

By some strange anomaly however, Schools television of the same company are allowed to deal with the wider issues involved; so for those who would like a more critical look at mass media and the role it plays in shaping society and trying to keep it where it is, it would be worthwhile tuning in to the revamped *Viewpoint* series (from which *Superman and the Bride* stemmed). Five of these will be shown on the Independent national networks at the 'educational' time of 10.04am. Starting on Wednesday 26th October, the first (and completely new) programme deals with the whole controversy surrounding the original *Viewpoint* programmes and whether or not they were *'impartial'*.

Jo Spence
Photography Workshop



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events

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courses conferences

● Irish Liaison Committee Delegate conferences on Ireland. Leeds Trade Hall Saturday 29th October. London Saturday 3rd December. Details etc from 53 Salisbury Mansions, St Anns Road, London N15.

● UNIVERSITY OF MANCHESTER/DEPARTMENT OF EXTRA-MURAL STUDIES. NATIONAL CONFERENCE: FAMILY VIOLENCE Wednesday-Friday, 9-11 November, 1977. Fees: Resident £20.00 Non-resident £17.00. A conference to discuss action needed to help the victims of domestic violence. Papers will be presented by researchers and practitioners, and we hope to bring together personnel from the main agencies involved in identifying and handling the problems. Further enquiries and requests for financial aid with fees to: Elinor Kelly, Department of Extra-Mural Studies, University of Manchester, M13 9PL (telephone 061-273 3333 ext 526).

● TRADE UNION SCHOOL. The Working Women's Charter Campaign is planning to hold a Trades Union School on 26th November at Friends Meeting Place, Church Street, Reading. It is designed to help women trying to organise and raise the question of Women's Rights on the shop floor and within the Unions. All for women who may just be interested to know more about what rights exist and how other women have fought to improve them. Contact Anita Turnbull, 3 Coleridge Road, London NW8. Telephone 01-340 8060 ext 54 (work).

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● A WOMAN'S PLACE, 42 Earlham St (01-836 6081). Open 10am-10pm weekdays and 10am-6pm Saturdays. Feminist information centre and meeting place. Books, publications, weekly newsletter (20p per copy or 15p by post), posters, women's group list, referral services, coffee and talk. Run by open collective which meets Tuesdays 7.30pm.

● WOMEN'S RESEARCH AND RESOURCES CENTRE information exchange, library and meeting place for people doing research on women and feminist concerns. Their bi-monthly newsletter lists and reviews latest publications, seminars and meetings held by them and others, and the latest gives details of women's studies courses running in Britain. Sub. annually £5, or what you can afford. WRRC, 27 Clerkenwell Close, London EC1. Tel: 01-253 7568.

publications

● WOMEN'S FIGHT Paper of the Working Women's Charter Campaign Autumn issue 17p from 1a Camberwell Grove, London SE5. 01-701 4173 or SUBSCRIBE £1.50 and support the WWCC.

● NOW OPEN: York Community Bookshop, 73 Walmgate, York (0904 37355)—with a wide selection of feminist literature and non-sexist children's books.

● WIRES: the national WOMEN'S LIBERATION INFORMATION & REFERRAL SERVICE. Send us all your information and queries. Keep in touch with the movement: bi-monthly NEWSLETTER subscription group rates (2 copies) £12/year, £3/quarter (small and poor groups, £8, £2); individual rates (1 copy) £5/year (£3 if poor). Additional copies at £3/year, £1/quarter. Cheques/POs/donations payable to WIRES c/o 30 Blenheim Terrace Leeds 1. Tel: LDS 35561 ask for WIRES (shared phone).

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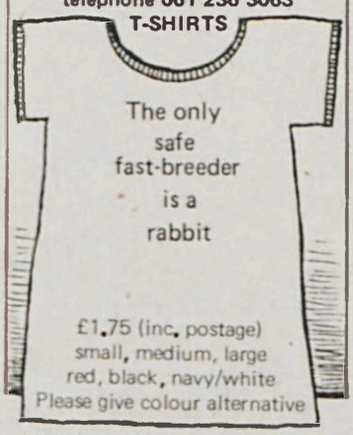

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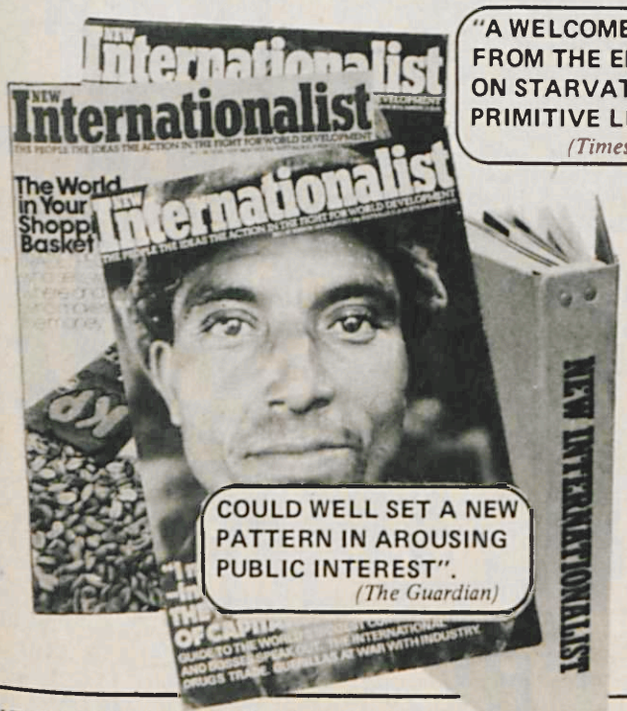

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2. **An unskilled British worker is twice as likely to die before 65 as a 'professional'.**
   (a) True. (b) False.
3. **How much does the Third World spend each year on arms?**
   (a) $1 billion.
   (b) $4 billion.
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4. **The N.I. is the biggest selling popular magazine on world development.**
   (a) True (b) False

(Answers below)

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ANSWERS 1. (b). 2. (a). 3. (c). 4. (a).

back Ribs ON abortion

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No 30 Feminist health clinic v Karman (inventor of Karman cannula)
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No 38 **How to get an abortion . . .** 'It's my body, not James White's'
No 39 Select Committee hearings condemn White's Bill . . . Abortions in Italy and Ireland . . . Church abortion report 'too liberal' . . . and more
No 40 Abortion week of action in Lisbon
No 42 **NAC conference; Structure and Feminism . . .** Review: 'An Egg Is Not A Chicken' film by Newsreel Collective
No 43 Abortion Campaign Week Of Action . . . SPUC struggles on
No 44 Abortion Law Reform Association conference-Vicar speaks out for abortion
No 45 NAC boycott Select Committee . . . ALRA working for 'A woman's right to choose' . . . **One Woman's Abortion** . . . Local abortion action

MARK RUSHER (IFL)

The NAC caravan's first stop in Winchester —as the council arbitrarily refused to let them use the main shopping precinct, they had to set up in a car park. But people did stop to see the displays, hear feminist music and talk with the local NAC group and the caravan team, who were soon off again to Cheltenham, Bristol and on around the country.
October: 19 Leeds, 20 York & Hull, 21 Sheffield, 22-3 Manchester, 24 Nottingham, 25 Wolverhampton, 27 Coventry, 28 Leamington, 29 leading the demonstration in Birmingham.

No 47 NAC not committing an offence . . . **Abortion marches in London and Rome** and the silence of the Press . . . 'Life' at school . . . Abortion at a price in Leicester
No 48 **Toppling the Italian Government**
No 49 Who profits from private abortion? . . . Clinic's existence denied
No 50 **New restrictions on abortion–Select Committee report . . . Abortions in the 1950s**
No 51 Health centre in Turin . . . Review: 'Taking Chances: abortion and the decision not to contracept' book by Kristen Luker
No 52 'Lifeline' advertisement . . . Botched up abortions in Columbia
No 53 New abortion gel
No 55 Benyon Bill–new anti-abortion onslaught . . . Review: 'Abortion in Demand' book by Victoria Greenwood and Jock Young
No 56 **Tribunal on abortion rights–at home and internationally**
No 57 **Anti-abortion bill gains ground**
No 58 NAC workshop at the National Women's Liberation Conference
No 60 Labour Abortion Rights Campaign gets going . . . National Abortion Campaign demonstration
No 61 **Abortion law in Italy**
No 62 **Taking over the pulpit . . .** Spray painter fined
No 63 Interview with gynaecologist who advocates menstrual extraction . . . Book protest

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Whenever abortion is illegal a great deal of backstreet abortion takes place. In Victorian and Edwardian England, abortion was in fact a normal and accepted part of working class life, and this was reflected in the attitudes of women.

'I'd rather swallow the druggist's shop and the man in't than have another kid'

Abortion was not technically illegal in Britain before the nineteenth century. This advertisement, for instance, appeared in the 'Morning Post' of April 1790:

'To the ladies—a lady whose situation may induce her to seek or require temporary retirement, may be accommodated agreeable to her wishes in the home of a gentleman of eminence in the profession, whose honour and secrecy may be depended on, and where every vestige of pregnancy is obliterated.'

The law on abortion was introduced in 1803, and tightened up with the 1861 Offences against the Person Act which allowed sentences from several years to death for abortionists. But in spite of the law, by the 1890s doctors were associating a fall in the birth rate with a rise in abortion. People were generally becoming aware of the advantages of small families. Birth control was becoming better known after the trial in 1877 of Annie Besant and Charles Bradlaugh for putting out contraceptive information. The working class of the 1870s was becoming more literate and urbanised, information could carry faster and people expected a higher standard of living while wages stagnated and unemployment was rising. The birth rate began to fall. But contraception remained expensive or unreliable.

The main methods of birth control available to the working class were abstention, the 'safe' period (anything but safe since it was thought to occur mid-way between periods at the very time of maximum fertility), and withdrawal. These all depended for success on the man's co-operation. So did the sheath which was the cheapest mechanical method, and could be bought for 6d per dozen, though 3/- per dozen was the more usual price. Since 30/- was considered a good wage, and one third of all families existed below the poverty line on less than 21/- per week, sheaths were an unattainable luxury.

Sponges, soluble pessaries, rubber diaphragms and syringes were sold to women by chemists, but success was not guaranteed unless two methods were combined. Spermicidal solutions for use with sponges or syringes had to be mixed by the woman herself, using quinine and other ingredients in a process resembling a complicated chemical experiment. One recipe involved mixing 35 parts of powdered starch, 15 parts of boric acid, 10 parts of gum arabic, 2½ parts of tannic acid and 2½ parts of citric acid. Women's contraception required time, space, perseverance and above all, money. The minimum outlay was 5/- to 6/-, at a time when a woman, if she went out to work, was unlikely to earn more than 12/- a week. So apart from abortion, working class women had little chance of controlling their own fertility.

Possibly a quarter or more of all working class women tried abortion. Most of these women, like those who practised birth control, were married and seem to have already had two or more children. To get some idea of the numbers involved, one mail order business alone sold drugs to 12,000 women in two years from 1896 to 1898.

Women attempting abortion generally used drugs, because instruments could only be used by another person so the operation was more expensive besides being much more likely at this time to result in illness or death. But many women tried more than one method if the first did not work. One woman, for example, who had already had several children, took herbs and when these had no effect scraped out her womb with a hairpin—she finally aborted some weeks later.

A wide variety of drugs and herbs, to be used singly or combined, were easily available without prescription from chemists and herbalists. They included colocynth ('bitter apples'), heira picra ('hikey pikey'), tansy, pennyroyal, apiol (combined with steel), gin and salts, iron and aloes, caraway seeds, turpentine, washing soda and quinine. A Birmingham midwife noted an unusual method—boiling copper coins and drinking the liquid. Most of these drugs taken in sufficient quantity caused vomiting, muscular contractions and convulsions which produced abortion as a side-effect.

By the 1890s a new method was becoming popular—lead pills. Women who worked in factories where white lead was used often had miscarriages, and this knowledge was no doubt responsible for the growing use of lead as an abortifacient. Lead was easy to obtain since lead plaster (diachylon) was sold to treat bruises and fractured ribs. It could then be mixed with aloes or boric acid to form pills, 'black sticks'.

Women took large doses; one aged 40 who had 11 children ate 40 pills without avail, another took 144 and miscarried 17 days later. In Newcastle it was said 'women take the drug regularly before each expected monthly period so as to be sure that the event is realised'. While the use of lead in Rotherham was so common that one GP 'when called in to see a woman who has aborted, invariably examined the gums for lead poisoning'—it left a blue line.

Women who took lead pills suffered from sickness, abdominal pains, headaches, paralysis of the hands, blindness and sometimes died. Other drugs had bad effects—a doctor in Thornton Heath was called to a woman who had become very ill with her 'hands and legs stone cold and clammy', after eating large quantities of crushed nutmeg, trying to abort.

There was no shortage of advertisements for abortion remedies; the medical profession were always complaining about the 'filthy advertisements which lie on every breakfast table'. The advertisers kept on the right side of the law by claiming to cure menstrual irregularities or anaemia.

'My special mixture of pills is guaranteed to be the most reliable remedy known' (Halifax paper just before World War 1).

'Widow Welch's female pills; prompt and reliable for ladies, 1/1 or 2/9 per box from all chemists' (*News of the World* 1912).

Sale of pills on mail-order or over the counter could be profitable. William Brown and 12 others were given short prison sentences in 1898 for conspiring to incite women to abortion. They ran a firm under the trade name 'Madame Frain', spent £2,800 a year on advertising, and sold bottles of 'magic mixture' labelled 'on no account to be taken by persons desirous of becoming mothers'.

Many women paid large sums of money for pills which had no effect. For example in 1896 a woman called at a Liverpool shop kept by a Mrs M'Conville and asked for the strongest remedy available. She was sold two bottles for 22/-, and when these failed she was sent two more bottles for another 22/- and then a further two for 15/-. None of these worked, and she died from peritonitis after trying to abort herself with a blunt instrument. The Liverpool shop made £35 to £40 each week, up to £30 of which was spent on adverts.

Women who brought abortion remedies could become victims of extortion and blackmail. A case came before the courts in 1899 of three brothers called Chrimes who traded in 'female remedies'. They sent 10,000 of their clients letters alleging to be from a 'public official', warning that legal proceedings had been commenced against the woman, and threatening that she would be arrested if she did not immediately forward a postal order for two guineas. £800 was sent in a few days 'with protestations of innocence and appeals for forgiveness'.

But most women could not afford advertised remedies, and instead information on abortion was transmitted by word of mouth, by an underground female grapevine. The same community network provided assistance at child-birth, since few women were able to have babies in hospital or afford medical care. Abortion was 'done by a woman who goes under some such name as "granny" and who uses crochet hooks generally or a knitting needle.[1] These women who performed abortion or traded in lead pills do not seem to have been regarded locally with any antagonism. When a woman was tried in Nottingham in 1906 for selling lead pills, some women even came forward as witnesses to claim that they had benefited from the pills.

Establishment opinions on the other hand were very hostile. Doctors and clergy were especially opposed to abortion, and also opposed birth control, though doctors obviously practiced it themselves since by 1914 they had the lowest family sizes of all occupational groups. A doctor from Torquay wrote to the British Medical Journal in 1906, 'It is a disgrace that so many women prefer the dangers and evils of plumbism (lead poisoning) to the fulfilment of their natural functions of women.' He asked 'Are the girls of today properly educated to be able to fulfil the duties of motherhood?'

Abortion was said to be due to the decline of family life and of traditional values, and like birth control was said to be the result of selfishness, love of luxury, pleasure, frivolity and self indulgence. One or two doctors admitted that women resorted to abortion not out of frivolity but out of economic necessity, but they offered no solution except the pious hope that more help might be provided by the state for women with large families. This was also the line pursued by the labour movement and by organisations such as the Co-operative Women's Guild.

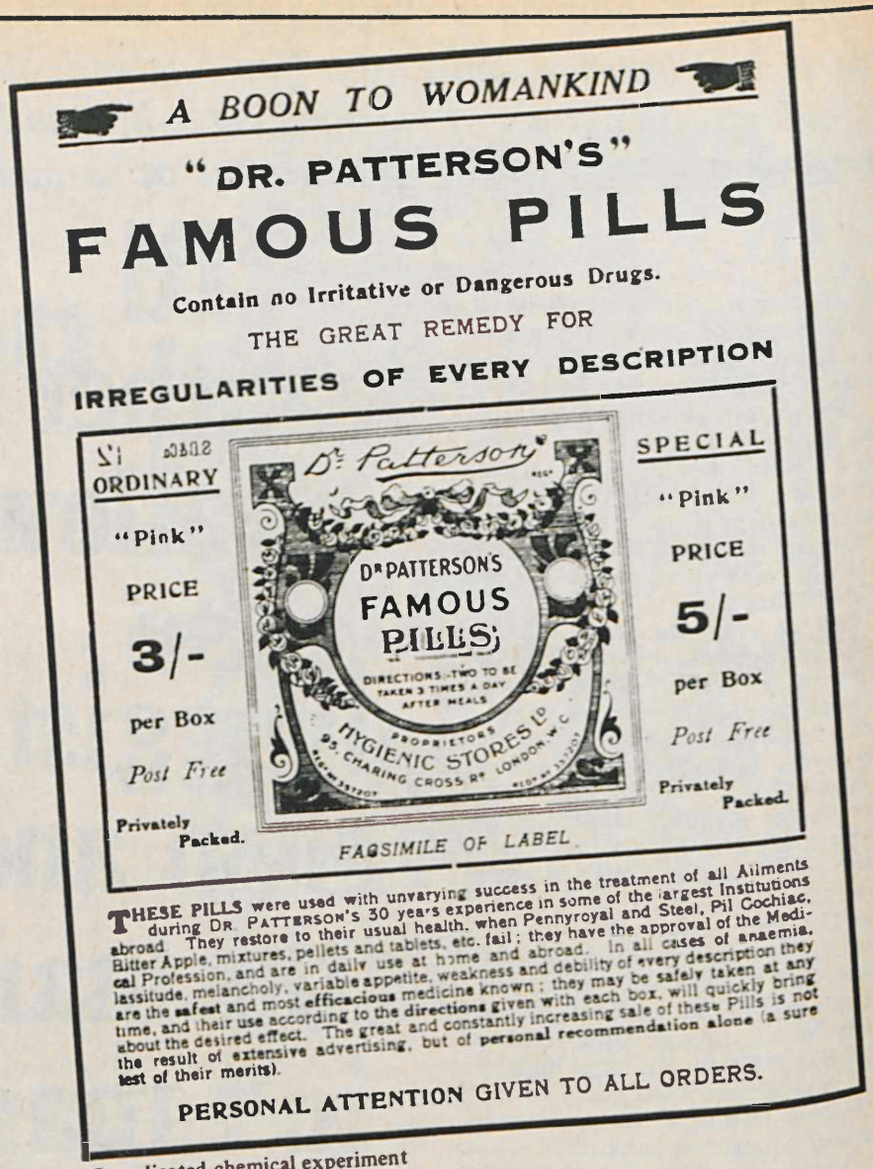
The feminist movement never officially referred to either birth control or abortion, partly because a major section of the movement was geared to solving the problems of middle class, unmarried ('redundant') women.

The supporters and propagandists of birth control were also opposed to abortion. Annie Besant who was prosecuted in 1877 for publishing 'Fruits of Philosophy' a book about contraception, wrote 'the destruction of the foetus is the destruction of life'. The Malthusian League which argued for birth control as the solution to poverty and unemployment was anxious to achieve respectability, and claimed that as contraception increased, abortion would be reduced—this, however, did not happen.

Abortion was regarded by 'respectable' public opinion with the same horror as infanticide. But ordinary women did not always share these attitudes. For one thing, their experience of childbirth and motherhood was very different from the idealised picture presented in the period. As one working class woman wrote to the Co-operative Women's Guild in 1914, 'All the beautiful in motherhood is very nice if one has plenty to bring up a family on, but what real mother is going to bring a life into the world to be pushed into the drudgery of the world at the earliest possible moment because of the stress on the family exchequer.'

Doctors were constantly surprised and irritated by women's refusal to accept that abortion was wrong, especially when the women in question were not always depraved members of the criminal classes but appeared quite ordinary and respectable. As a doctor told the National Birth Rate Commission in 1913, 'They cannot understand why a doctor's conscience varies from theirs. They say, "It can't be alive yet, it is only so many weeks" . . . ' He added, 'It is always a great comfort to me that [abortion] is criminal as well.' A judge complained in 1899, 'It is often most difficult and in many cases impossible to make women see the moral difference between early getting rid of the product of conception and using methods to prevent pregnancy altogether.'

Women generally regarded abortion as inevitable and only to be regretted because it often failed or led to ill health or death. The investigators for the North of England birth rate survey found, for instance, in Birkenhead that 'women will frankly state how they avoided pregnancy and recount how they have tried everything to



Complicated chemical experiment

Women who bought abortion rememdies could become victims of extortion and blackmail

bring an undesired pregnancy to a premature end. One tells another, "I ain't going to have none—I know summat." But a woman in York whose husband earned 24/- a week explained, 'sometimes they can take a chemist's shop and it does no good, the child comes just the same, but it's puny and half starved. A woman (who had 10 children already) said to me, "I'd rather swallow the druggist's shop and the man in't than have another kid." She used to boil 20 herbs together mixed with gin and salts and take a glass each morning before breakfast.'

When the interviewer tentatively suggested self-restraint as an alternative to abortion, he was met with good-humoured scorn, 'Self restraint! Not much! If my husband started on self-restraint, I should jolly well know there was another woman in the case!' She added 'There's any amount of illegal operations."

A particularly full account of working class women's attitude is to be found in 'Maternity', a collection of letters published by the Co-operative Women's Guild in 1915. They sent a questionnaire to 600 married women who were, or had been, officers of the Guild, as part of their campaign to improve maternity services. A sample of 160 were published.

The questionnaire did not ask about birth control or abortion, but 20 women said they used or approved of birth control, and 7 mentioned abortion. None of these condemned abortion and all were sympathetic. It was clear that their attitudes stemmed from their own experience of the problems of motherhood.

Though their husbands were mainly skilled workers earning between 24/- and £2 a week, almost all the women were short of money. Most had worked at home, or at a job, up to within a few hours of childbirth, and had returned to work shortly afterwards: 'Fancy bending over the washing tub, doing the family washing an hour or two before the baby is born.' Most had suffered during pregnancy from continual sickness, varicose veins, swollen hands and feet or neuralgia, and gave birth at home in overcrowded conditions. There was little medical help: 'I took it for granted that women had to suffer at this time, and it was best to be brave and not to make a fuss.' Most who had large families regretted it.

Two letters were from women who had attempted abortion. One wrote a long, sensitive letter describing her life since she married in 1900, aged 28 and completely ignorant of the facts of life. She wryly recollected that all her mother had said on the subject of childbirth was 'God never sends a babe without bread to feed it.' She added, 'Dame Experience long ago knocked the bottom out of the argument for me.'

After she had had three children in under four years, 'Motherhood ceased to be a crown of glory and became a fearsome thing to be shunned and feared.' When her third child was expected, 'Well meaning friends said, "You cannot afford another baby, take this drug." I took their strong concoctions to purge me of the little life that might be mine.' The drugs failed and she had 5 children and one miscarriage.

Her husband was a skilled worker who was educated, and she became aware that the constant burden of childcare was hindering her own intellectual development: 'I felt that the comradeship between myself and my husband was breaking down, I had to fight or go under.' So she bought a 1d edition of the classics and 'used to put them on a shelf in front of me on washing day, fastened back their pages with a clothes peg, and learned pages of Lowell and Longfellow as I mechanically rubbed the dirty clothes and thus wrought my education.' She very much approved of birth control, though it had not apparently been possible for her to practice it, and concluded, 'Race suicide if you will is the policy of the mothers of the future; who shall blame us?'

Another woman with 8 live children, 2 still born and 3 miscarriages wrote, 'I have resorted to drugs, trying to prevent, or bring about a slip . . . I believe I and others have caused bad health to ourselves and our children, but what was one to do?'

One letter-writer had met a number of women who 'felt they could not carry children, some because of bad husbands and others because they felt they could not properly feed and clothe those they had. These all took some kind of drug, and of course it did the work they wanted it to. The doctor felt very sorry for one woman (with seven children), and could not blame her. She had difficulty in rearing these seven. I talked seriously to her but she said, "Mrs—I will not have any more by him and I should not have cared if I had died." '

Probably none of these women was active in the feminist movement or the Suffragette agitation, but all realised that large families created an impossible situation, and all would have liked women to have been able to control the numbers of their children. As abortion was often the only way of doing this, it was accepted as part and parcel of everyday life.

1 *Quoted in Marie Stopes* **Contraception** *1946 edition*
2 *Ethel Alderton* **Reports on the English Birth-rate** *1914 (Eugenics Laboratory Memoirs)*
3 *Evidence to the National Birth Rate Commission,* **The Declining Birth-rate, its causes and effects.** *The Commission was set up by the National Council for Public Morals but had a semi-official status.*
1 and 2 provide a mine of information on abortion and contraceptive practices in Edwardian England.

A fuller version of this article will appear in History Workshop Journal 4 in November. Subscriptions £5 per year for 2 issues, from PO Box 69, Oxford.

The Co-operative Women's Guild Collection of writings on Maternity will be republished by Virago Books in Spring 1978.

meet McLaren

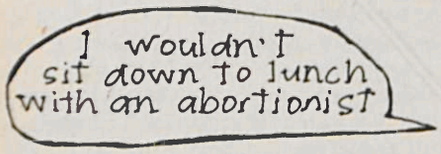
Fewer women get NHS abortions in Birmingham than almost anywhere else in Britain. Nationally, nearly half last year's abortions were done on the NHS, but in Birmingham, nine out of ten women were forced to pay for private treatment. Professor Hugh McLaren, prominent in SPUC (the Society for the Protection of the Unborn Child) and chief gynaecologist for the Birmingham area, is proud of his city's record. A woman in Birmingham asked him why he thought there was such regional variation in NHS abortion provision.

Patients are a bit bamboozled that you have to pay for your abortions here, and you don't have to pay in London, or Aberdeen or Cambridge. You want me to explain that? There are certain doctors who will do this and some who won't and they tend to clump together. It's a snob thing really–I wouldn't sit down to lunch with an abortionist. So like calls to like and they tend to accumulate. London of course has been a huge abortion centre, but up here we got rid of abortions in 1952. Twenty-five years ago we said, "Is there a case for abortion?" I remember writing an essay on this–"Is there one woman who needs an abortion?" and the answer is very few, we got down to one a year. Now that's talking medicine. But when the sociologists came along and said a woman who resents being pregnant is a patient *(from the Latin 'I suffer', McLaren points out)*–that's how thinking started in Aberdeen. They will claim they're more compassionate than we are.

Gradually, with the students here though, I think I must have had some effect, but so have the other ten consultants here, who also regarded abortion as a failure . . .

Are the gynaecologists within Birmingham Teaching area appointed by the Area Health Authority?

Trainees are picked by us for aptitude. We do it. The administrators don't know; they couldn't say who's likely to have neat



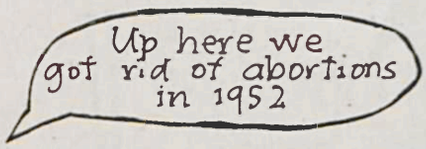
hands, get up in the night, have a good conscience–we do it, we pick them. There are 83 consultants *(McLaren is presumably referring to the whole Health Region here)* so that when a young man is picked out, it's a sort of laying on of hands–you say "I will bag you" and "I will arrange for you to go to the professorial unit and get your membership, and go to America for a year" –it's a laying on of hands, do you follow?

So a young man who said, "I'd like you to train me, Professor, but I'm a keen abortionist," I'd show him the lift–it's a sort of matching of personalities and morals. Morals are very important, not only abortion morals, but with women *(students)*. We like them to be stable, married and terribly respectable–you can't have sleazy, oily girls, not in our profession, you have to be above suspicion . . . A man will tend to pick someone who is going to be his son for seven years.

There are certain places where they are liberal–Solihull *(outside the Birmingham Health Authority but in the same Region)*. I have to think. Yes, Solihull full stop. That's three liberals out of 83. So a very liberal chap might be trained there and not be penalised for being quick with the curettes, but he'd be penalised here, he'd get thrown out and that's tough.

Do you think the 1967 Abortion Act was inadequate or adequate?

It was unnecessary, quite unnecessary, but it was sold as putting case law on the statute books; it was sold as compassionate. Many MPs voted for it without realising it was the beginnings of abortion on request,

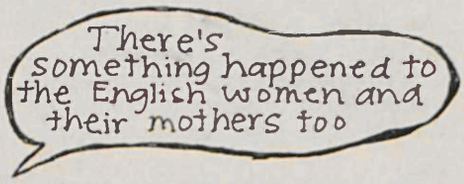


that's how we saw it so we fought it tooth and nail, but Roy Jenkins pushed it through, he found time; whereas the present modification *(Benyon's Bill)*, the Government saw fit that it was killed. It is these boys the barristers and lawyers, who really make the big decisions.

If you want to go with an ethical question to a lawyer, he'll give you a legal answer. If you want to ask an ethical question, you really ought to ask the Pope; although I'm a Protestant, I'd listen to him because he's good at ethics. Or else you go to the Archbiship of Canterbury. We've got a moral issue here, you wouldn't go to a shower of MPs, schoolteachers, lawyers and throwouts.

So you think the law before the '67 Act was adequate?

Adequate yes, but not for social abortion on demand. You got put in jail if you behaved the way you do now. Now the backstreet abortionist has moved up to the front street and he's safe. There have been one or two doctors gonged for not filling



up their forms, but you can really say we've got abortion on demand, although being English we don't like to say so. I think England is ashamed of their Abortion Act but doesn't know how to unscramble the egg–because the habits of women have moved. They say, "I'm not having this one and I hope I can get it for nothing, but I'm going to get it anyway," so it's had a great impact on you lot, the young women of the country. The word 'abortionist'–I never even heard it when I was young, it just wasn't allowed to be mentioned, though it's table talk now–"Are you going to keep this one? Or are you getting rid of it?" There's something happened to the English women and their mothers too.

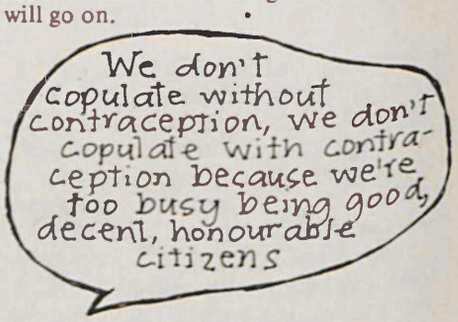
Do you think NHS cutbacks have had an effect on abortion provision?

We'd put up marquees and do it outside here if it was necessary, we don't even believe that it's right or good medicine.

What was your attitude to the Benyon Bill?

It was an attack on the British Pregnancy Advisory Service. There are rackets. BPAS is a racket and the racket is that you go up and the first thing they say is, "Have you got the money, can you come tomorrow?" *(BPAS and PAS probably have better counselling services than the NHS, and provide loans and grants)*. That's not medicine and it's illegal. The new law was Parliament trying to push some morality into the situation.

I think there will have to be a new kind of morality and it will have to be established by parents and grandparents weighing in on their child when it's five. You can't suddenly say "Oh dear she's pregnant" in the sixth form at school. That's too late. So I think that unless a new morality is handed to the children, with an iron resistance to the porno magazines, Girlies for the boys and *Honey* and others for the girls, which are really immoral–if there isn't something solid handed to the children so they can say, "We don't go to brothels, we don't use harlots; we don't copulate without contraception, we don't copulate with contraception because we are too busy being good, decent, honourable citizens"–unless that happens, then this massacre will go on, and we're into a million and a half, the massacre of a whole generation, and it will go on.



I get the impression that the needle's swinging to a responsibility among young people. Some of this responsibility I don't approve of–I don't approve of 20,000 attending Brook Clinic, all with coils and pills, but the fact that they take the trouble not to get pregnant, though unmarried, is a step in the right way. Love, marriage and children, and responsibility and houses, that's the target and I think girls are being cheated by this new era. I think men are being cheated too . . . I don't think the law will ever make people moral, but the doctor's resistance to this "Look, I don't want it, you kill it" is right. It is an impertinence–we're not having it! □

Demonstrate for Women's Choice, not Doctor's Choice on October 29 in Birmingham.

Details in Shortlist.

TOOTH & NAIL

ON THE HOME FRONT

The cost of a wife

Although a wife can be regarded as a liability to the budget in that she has to be fed, clothed, amused and given pocket money, she is in all other respects the most valuable asset in sheer monetary value that a **young man can have**. Some joker once calculated how much a wife would **earn per** year if all her working hours were totted up. By the time the hours she spent as a laundress, housekeeper, shopper, cook, baby-minder, seamstress, cleaner, etc., etc., had been added up, she was earning, even at union rates, well on £2,000 a year.

WHAT ARE THE DREAMS of the everyday housewife? I'll tell you. They're made of glamorous nightwear like this, intended for his eyes only.

Janet Reger, the English designer approached by the French to sell her lingerie in Paris, designs deliberately with men in mind. Because "women should dress and undress for men."

Birmingham Evening Mail, September 20. sent in by Jean Flinthart, Birmingham.

It must also be remembered that the wife may need to spend more on clothes and hair-do's if she goes out on view to the world, than if she can wear trousers or a house dress most of the time, and only change at week-ends or in the evenings. Her fares will also cost money, and there is the fact that she probably will not have time to do so much sewing, house painting, etc., or to cook quite such cheap meals, as **she would** if she devoted her whole time to it.

Wives can be very short-sighted at such times and the positive savings and benefits that will accrue to the whole family and all her friends need to be proposed skilfully if they are to prove convincing. Winning the support of one's wife (children seem to have an in-built enthusiasm for such things) is really the only obstacle of any magnitude to be overcome.

from leaflet for wood turning machines. sent in by Sarah Gillespie, Killerman, Eire.

There are two basic reasons why women like a man who is "free with his money" (but not a spendthrift). The first is their longing for security. Since they are the child-bearers, they must have a nest for their young, so to speak, and the better lined it is, the safer it will obviously be. For biological fulfilment, most women, whether they realise it or not, need children, and this

will mean that for at least ten years of life they will be either without earning capacity themselves or reduced to at least half power. The advantages of choosing a good provider for a mate are therefore paramount.

THE BREAD strike has demonstrated once again the British housewife's devotion to her family—and more especially to her husband.

Housewives who queued for anything up to an hour for a double-priced loaf at the weekend admitted that their husbands would not have been "so daft."

But for a woman to come home without a loaf would be an admission of defeat, she would be a failure as an educated housewife in her own eyes.

Dad may traditionally be the breadwinner, but mum is still the undisputed bread buyer.

When she returns proudly with the loaf she has battled for, she is proving both to herself and her family how much she cares for them.

Most women are never happier than when they are making sacrifices for their family.

And what greater sacrifice can the hard-pressed housewife make than to spend mum money on her lunch hour, edging along the pavement in the hope of buying a small thing (albeit

Daily Mirror, September 12. sent in by Kate Smith, Norwich, & Wendy Bradley, Sheffield.

One of the things which mean most to him, a woman reasons, is his hard-earned money. If he is willing to spend it on her rather than on himself, this is a proof of love. A tangible proof, moreover, which she can display before her girl-friends.

This desire to have money spent on them remains very deeply **seated** in the truly feminine woman's heart, despite the rapidly changing attitude towards the spending of money which is now developing among the wage-earning young.

chapter in book for schools - 'Money Wise' by Gilda Lunn, published Mills & Boon. sent in by Gilly Love, Houghton Conquest.

Women are only good and nice to live with when they are happy, and whether they are happy depends, for the majority of them at least, not on their careers, not on the climate, not on whether they themselves are rich or poor, but upon the men in their lives.

The person who said marriage was out of date is out of his mind. If there were no marriages and children there would be no more people in the world. Women were not put in the world to have a good time as your writer suggests, they are here to give us men a good time—we work for it.

Letter in Evening News August 12. sent in by Gerrie Moore, London NW1

JOB IN A MILLION

When I married, I changed my job to work for one man. As in all good posts, I was eventually given added responsibilities, in the form of a couple of juniors to supervise.

I soon realised I needed to be a good all-rounder to cope with the miscellaneous duties, many of which are boring and repetitive.

However, the perks are excellent — my own car, free meals, plenty of opportunity to shop during working hours. Moreover, clothes suitable for my position are chosen by me, but charged to the firm's account.

Of course, there are occasional rows with the Big Chief and the youngsters don't always pull their weight, but the hours are flexible and the working conditions congenial. I'd be a fool to give in my notice.

The Boss is such a lovely man, you see. The fact that I am in love with him adds considerable spice to the working day.

There are many similar concerns to mine throughout the world. Our service is tried and trusted and our end-product is the backbone of the country.

Why not start a branch yourself? Call it "Stay-At-Home-Mum (Limited)" — like I do! — Mrs Shirley Reed, Stag Lane, Great Kingshill, High Wycombe, when £3.50 for her Letter of the Month.

in 'Annabel', August.

TRAIN HIM

If your husband still longs for the old fat and starch diet, you must train him. Gently, persuasively, and with imagination.

If he won't take care of himself, you've got to do it for him. It's part of your job.

His future depends on how you do your job.

His health, his looks, his life are all in your hands.

from 'How a wife can add years to her husband's life' in 'Healthy Living'. sent in by Rowan Reed, Hebden Bridge.

many of them found ready employment with white middle-class housewives who, like housewives the world over, valued more than their virtue or life itself the availability of domestic service.

Observer, September 18. sent in by Irene Smithe, Bodmin

Age Concern executive Edward Walton told a conference: "Women are muddled in the sense that they don't have nervous strain put on them.

Unhealthy

"Their husband are out fighting the world while the women are at home making the cakes.

"Of course they have arduous responsibilities. But they can phase them—very much like an animal would—throughout the day."

Mr. Walton added: "The gap between men and women's life expectancy is quite unhealthy."

Another Age Concern worker, widow Joyce Percy, 60, told the conference: "If you live too long, you become a nuisance.

"Women should get jobs which will put them in the same position as their husband, so they don't outlive them too very long."

Daily Mirror, September 22. sent in by Hilary Graham, Heslington.

Hastings & Thanet Building Society ad in Radio Times sent in by Vanessa Coade, London

WHO TO ATTACK ABOUT SEXIST ADS

The manufacturers of the product advertised and/or the agency who make up the ad.

WHO TO COMPLAIN TO

The Independent Broadcasting Authority, for ITV ads and programmes, 70 Brompton Road, London SW9. The Advertising Standards Authority, though notoriously unresponsive to complaints about sexism, 15 Ridgemount Street, London WC1.

WHO TO WORK WITH

THE NATIONAL UNION OF JOURNALISTS. Send a letter of complaint about sexist material to The Mother or Father of the NUJ Chapel at the publication concerned, with a copy to the editor, and to the Equality Working Party, NUJ Acorn House, 314 Grays Inn Road, London WC1

AFFIRM (Alliance For Fair Images and Representation in Media). A group acting against sexism and offensive stereotyping, can be contacted at 35 Colehearne Road, London SW10.

we received lots of really nasty cuttings this month — please keep sending them in!

VAL WILMER

Kathy Stobart plays soprano saxophone at Bull's Head, Barnes. Bassist is Harvey Weston.

WOMEN – & ALL THAT JAZZ

The year was 1950 and British saxophonist Kathy Stobart, already with a dozen years playing experience behind her, had formed a nine-piece band. Instead of playing music that was easy on the ear, she developed an experimental jazz repertoire, rehearsing intensively until the band was so accomplished they were, as she put it, 'Good enough for the Third Programme'. The public's response was positive and they easily passed the mandatory BBC audition. The next step was obvious: a meeting with the BBC's Head of Light Music to secure a broadcast.

As soon as she walked into the office, Kathy realised she was in the presence of a man who not only disliked women but, being a frustrated musician himself, had less than no time for women players. His first question was 'What did you want to see me about?' and this he followed with, 'Why do you do what you do?'

Kathy was stunned. She had earned a substantial reputation as an inspired jazz player through her frequent guest spots from the London Palladium with the Ted Heath Orchestra and on the road with Vic Lewis, then one of the leading big bands. 'I've done it since I was a child,' she countered. 'Music's in my blood, it's in the family.' To her amazement, he went on to ask 'What real purpose is there in letting them hear your band?'

When she pointed out that the music had been favourably received, he told Kathy that her expectations were 'very naive'. That was it. A temper that she seldom unleashes exploded. 'You ask me why do I do it? What sort of a question is that, for God's sake? I do it because I *must* do it. I do it because it's *there*. I *do* it. You're sitting there like a judge, talking to me—you're the person dishing out the broadcasts. I want a broadcast because I'd like people to hear the band.'

By this time the two protagonists were red-faced and on their feet. The interview was rapidly terminated. Kathy's agent, who had said nothing during the exchanges, told her that she had probably blown any opportunity she might have had as she stormed out of the office, heart racing and head throbbing. Although she'd already passed one audition before this interview, she was forced to take another over a technicality, and the rejection came almost immediately. The result was that Kathy Stobart, one of the leading saxophonists in the modern jazz idiom, has never broadcast with her own band to this day. And this, in spite of the fact that she continues to play with a dedication and intensity that most instrumentalists of her era have long since abandoned in favour of the financial security of session work.

'If ever there was a turning point in my life that interview did it,' she said. That man had a huge effect on my ultimate success as a bandleader and a public figure.' At a time when women in the jazz and danceband field were relatively few, and might have

anticipated the occasional broadcast for 'curiosity' value alone, the discrimination was intense. The attitude of male instrumentalists ranged from tolerance to active encouragement—they knew a woman like Kathy could blow—but in the BBC hierarchy it was another story. Broadcasts were crucial to survival in those days, but not even Ivy Benson, who had a considerable reputation in the dancehalls, was allowed on the air with her own all-woman orchestra. Small wonder so few women instrumentalists emerged from the big bands.

Kathy Stobart was born in South Shields, County Durham. Her mother, who now lives next door to Kathy in Norbury, was an accomplished pianist who could sight-read anything. One of Kathy's earliest memories is the 'thump' as yet another bundle of sheet music fell through the letterbox. Her mother would unroll and straighten the sheets, then rush straight to the piano, dustcap still on her head, to play the latest melodies. 'She started playing at 5—that music was *in her toenails* since she was a baby. She had second sight as regards accompanying and that was why all that music was in me. Though I could hardly put a name to anything, I'd heard all the melodies and harmonies going through my mind since I was literally in the cradle.'

Two brothers played clarinet and saxophone and by the start of the War, Kathy had persuaded her mother to buy her an alto. This and frequent appearances at local concert parties stood her in good stead when at the age of 14 she brazened her way into an audition. A tenor saxophonist was required, yet Kathy, barely competent on alto and unable to improvise, went on the road with the band, singing, dancing and doing impersonations. She did the occasional bit of saxophone playing, all for 8/6d a week plus board and lodging. 'I was literally the epitome of the girl who was thoroughly starstruck, with nothing else to give except the urge to really do it. And that's what you need, isn't it? Total dedication.'

After a couple of years on the road, she suddenly found herself involved in RAF sessions, playing with some of the country's top jazz players. Male musicians were being called up for fighting service and her enthusiasm for playing made her in demand in a way that might not have been possible in peacetime. She was introduced to recordings by the American greats and received constant encouragement from experienced players. One man told her, 'You've got quite a good sound, why don't you stand up and play something?' Kathy, reared on sight-reading, felt unable to improvise, but her Mother soon recognised the possibilities of her associating with these players. 'She used to say "If they've got a weekend's pass, tell them to come up here. I'll make a bed up on the front room couch, and if they can teach you some music, I'll feed them." And of course, I used to pick their brains. They all treated me like their favourite sister.'

At the age of 17, Kathy was leading her own band in London. She also worked with pianist Dennis Rose who was the driving force behind the new music of the day, and to be accepted into that circle was the ultimate accolade. 'I played jazz morning, evening—everything. I used to stay up 24 hours a day just playing, playing, and listening to music.' While bombs were dropping over London, she wandered through Soho, saxophone under her arm, looking for a place to play. She knocked at the doors of drinking clubs and underworld bottle parties. And wherever she went, the musicians protected her. 'Sometimes there were guys who would touch my legs and I would move away. If any stranger started telling a dirty joke, he'd get a big dig in the ribs from the boys in the band—"Not in front of Kath". I was 17 and they just wouldn't have it.'

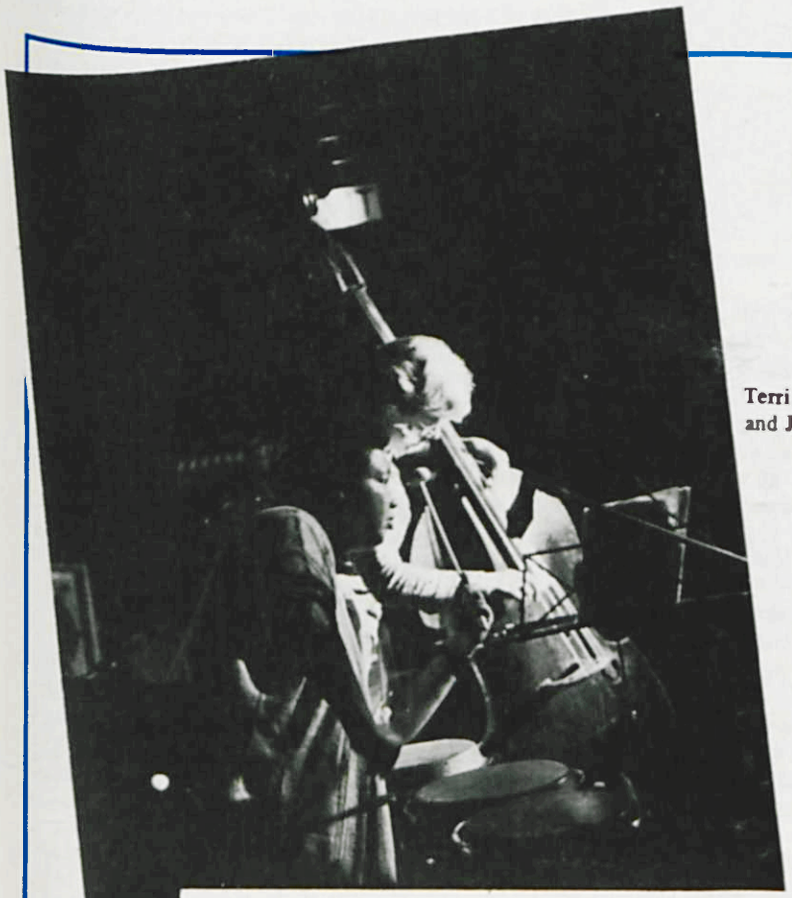
The jazz world is one that deliberately excludes women from its most important activities. As she grew up, going through marriages to two musicians herself, Kathy found that her route to survival was to hang out with the male players and share their problems for some of the time, but not *all* the time. 'I'd go down to the pub but I didn't stay with them too long. It's not advisable, you just don't. They want to be themselves—and so do I.'

Now, after several years with trumpeter Humphrey Lyttelton, Kathy Stobart leads her own quintet, one of the best jazz groups in London.

Playing for audiences accustomed to earlier styles of jazz it would be simple for her to take the easy way out and stick to uncomplicated material. Instead she works within the areas developed by people like John Coltrane, perhaps the most important innovator in contemporary black music, playing with the sensitivity and passion that has always set her work apart. In response to the inevitable quip that she plays 'like a man', she retorts: '*They* invented that and it's supposed to be the ultimate compliment. I personally would not apply it to myself because I feel that I've got a good pair of lungs on me and I've got quite well-matured emotions.'

Her music has the freshness of someone whose interest in developing is constant. As she told the man from the BBC, 'Music is in my blood—I *do* it.'□

Val Wilmer



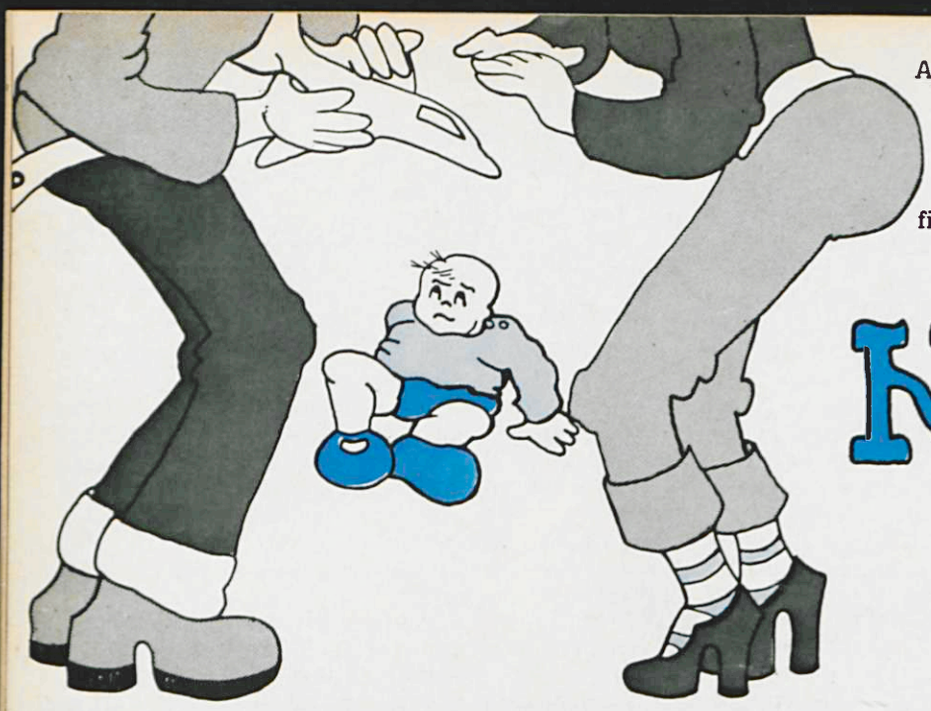
Terri Quaye (congas) and Jill Lyons (bass).

VAL WILMER

Working most of her life as a backing musician, Terri Quaye (who now teaches drums at the Women's Arts Alliance) has recently formed an all-woman jazz trio *Moonspirit*. The music is based round Terri's ability to use her drums as a melodic 'voice' instead of a purely rhythmic instrument. With Gill Lyons' impressive double bass and bass guitar playing and keyboard player Val Fenton providing the necessary cross-tension to their music, *Moonspirit* are already making headway in what has always been recognised as a highly chauvinistic musical area.

Although the group is still in its teething stages (Val Fenton's playing is a bit hesitant at times) it already has a tightness and sense of common purpose that's exhilarating to see and hear. After years working with male musicians they say it's a huge relief to be able to make music together because 'we have nothing to prove to each other so we're starting a leap ahead'.□

Penny Valentine



A group of women in Leeds decided a year ago to make an animated cartoon film about the need for better daycare for the Under 5's, provided by the state. Today, the first proofs of the film are emerging from the processing laboratory.

THE NURSERY FILM

The Nursery Film, ten minutes long, is centered around a meeting organised by a little girl called Tracey, chaired by babies and other children. Their talk about the need for more nurseries is intercut with their experience of everyday situations—in the supermarket, at home. Instead of seeing the problem simply as a need to let mothers out of the house (and into a low-paid job), *The Nursery Film* discusses less familiar problems which are also crucial. Problems like the development of lonely children—deprived of the company of other kids; or the availability of large, expensive toys in a nursery environment that the average household can't afford.

The story is seen from the children's eye-view: adults are only ever seen from the waist down wearing boring, dingy colours. This is in contrast to the children's clothes painted in bright primary colours: children who represent a cross-section of racial groups in Britain, and girls who are clearly active and energetic.

The idea for *The Nursery Film* grew out of the teaching experiences of a woman who had previously worked in animation. Having started to teach a course on child-care in London to older schoolchildren she was struck by the lack of visual material, none of it positively stressing the benefits of daycare facilities for both mother and child.

After moving away from London, she sketched out some ideas for a short animated film to show the urgent need for nurseries for the Under 5's. She hoped it would fill a gap in the courses frequently taught to school-leavers, in further education colleges, community centres, health centres and so on.

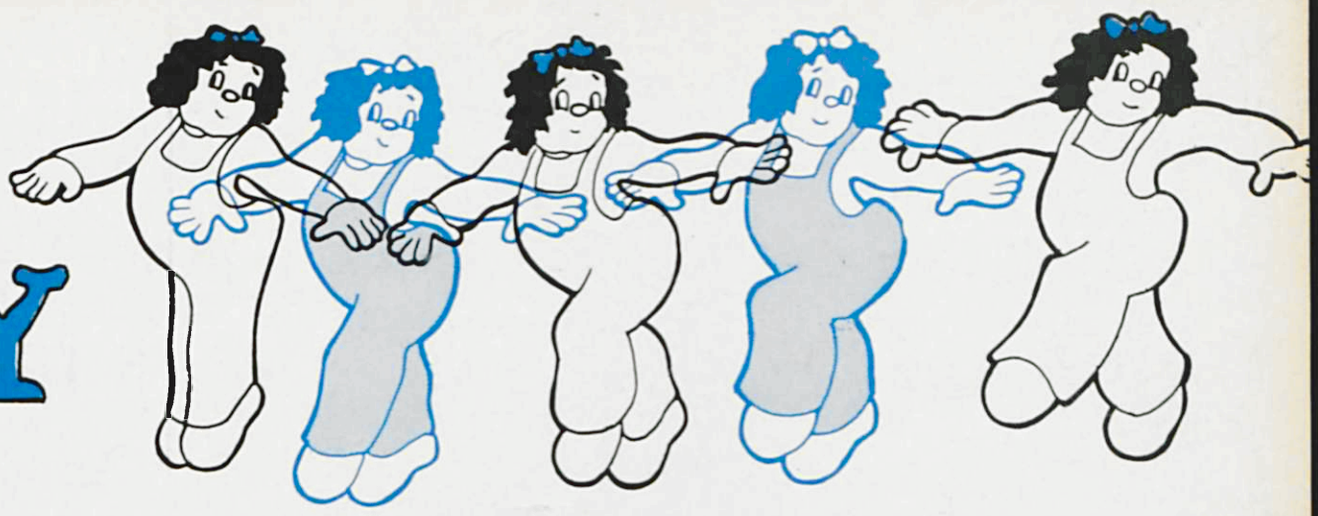
Through the Socialist Women's Action group in Leeds, she met four other women who were interested in working on the film. Two had been to art school and the others had no art training at all. As the only woman with any previous experience in animation she had to share her knowledge and skills, which was complicated by the fact that they did not all join the group at the same time. One woman said: 'I'd always enjoyed messing around with paint and it seemed easy enough to learn—although looking back on it we made a lot of mistakes in our early painting days.'

Making the film in their small office, learning, sharing and discussing was positive, though the lack of money restricted experimenting: in film, changes or mistakes are very expensive. Their progress was also limited by the lack of resources which are generally available in commercial studios, such as punches, Grant enlargers, access to cameras and quantities of cels and pencils. Yet the group's dedication to the project has grown stronger over the months—one said: 'The work progressed and I got more involved with it—my hours increased and my commitment to it. I found I wanted to take on more and more responsibility and did . . . but sometimes I get tired and my energies are quite split.'

She has a child and finds the switch from working on the film to being with her child in the evening particularly exhausting—other women in the group help when they can. It's demanding, but the two women with kids said how satisfying they found the work—'The film has given me an outlet for expressing a personal point of view in art in a way that makes me feel comfortable.'

At present the group are desperate for money to finish the film. They are working outside commercial institutions and have had to rely on funding from organisations

HE ERY LM



and individuals. Their major grant has come from Yorkshire Arts, and a Job Creation Scheme now pays their wages until January. They've also two generous contributions from feminists. But they need to work till next March in order to finish the film. This will cost £1,500 in wages and £1,500 in materials. The group would be grateful for suggestions of possible sources of finance or for donations large or small. They can be contacted at:
20 Westminster Buildings
31 New York Street
Leeds 2

So far several education authorities have made firm offers to buy prints of the film and the group hope it will also be used by women's groups, mother and toddler groups, and by unions which have pledged support for the fight for free day-care. The film will be accompanied by different discussion notes depending on the audience.

If other women are interested in working on similar projects please contact the group as they hope to continue making animated films and start a workshop.

Some animated films to watch out for:
The Owl Who Married A Goose (7 mins)
by Caroline Leaf. An Eskimo legend.
Contemporary Films will have it soon.

The Street (10 mins)
by Caroline Leaf. Comedy about a Jewish family in New York. Available from Contemporary Films.

Puttin' On The Ritz (3½ mins)
by Antoinette Starkiewicz.
Tap dancing to Irving Berlin song.
Contemporary Films.

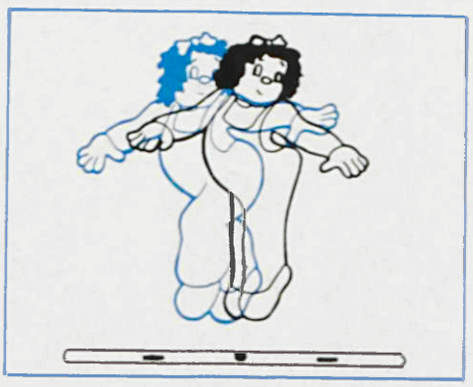
The Swiss Graffiti
by Jacqueline Veuve and Monique Renault.
A herstory of women in Switzerland.
Available from The Other Cinema.

CONTEMPORARY FILMS: 01-437 9392.
OTHER CINEMA: 01-748 8508

Animation is a way of creating 'moving' images from drawings or artworks. The illusion of movement is like a flickbook where a figure or object drawn in different positions appears to move as you flick through.

Every second of time requires 12 different drawings. *The Nursery Film*, 10 minutes long, will have used at least 7,200 images.

An animated film is usually made up of sequences constructed from artworks or drawings that form different scenes. Generally there is a background with figures and/or objects moving and/or static in the foreground.



The images are drawn onto paper and then traced onto a 'cel' (celluloid), which is a transparent sheet. You can trace with a rapidograph (fine, black pen) with brush and ink, or with a greasy pencil that will adhere to the cel. Then you turn the cel over and paint on the reverse side. To photograph you turn it over again so that the pen side is upward. This means the colour painted on the reverse side can show through with a smooth surface and an even density. Special (and expensive) paints are used as they must have an opaque finish. Cels are punched on one side so that they can be lined up or registered on a peg bar (see illustration).

Every cel is numbered in the order it appears in the sequence of the film. Each scene makes a 'picture' constructed on different levels (layers of cels) and movement is created by changing one or more of the levels, in numbered order. The order of animation is communicated through a 'dope-sheet', an instruction chart mapping out the cel changes and camera movements related to time. These in structions must be clearly understood by the camera person; mistakes cost a lot of money in film.

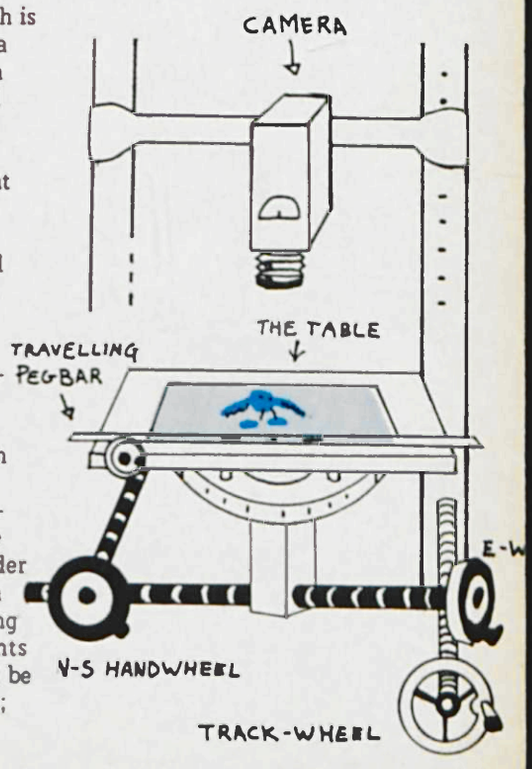
The animation camera is the same camera used in movie-making and is a part of the general equipment required for cel animation called the rostrum. The camera runs up and down vertical tracks attached to a table where the artwork is pegged and kept flat under glass (see illustration). The artwork is photographed one frame at a time, each frame of film is like a separate photograph. Every second of time means the rostrum person has pressed a button 24 times.

By turning a wheel, the camera moves up and down the vertical tracks: this is called tracking. When the camera is further away from the table a large area of the artwork will be seen on the film. When the camera is near the table you see a detail or close-up of the artwork.

The table moves east↔ west and north ↕ south also by turning wheels, and these movements are called pans. This moves the artwork in any direction you want. The table can also rotate 360 degrees and so there are great possibilities for all kinds of movement.

The peg-bar moves east↔west and enables you to move one piece of artwork while the rest remains static.

All three movements can be used simultaneously.



Social Security Too Low

ORIGINAL

If you're not a 'man with a family', 'an unemployed man with a wife and two children', or one of the increasing number of unemployed claimants who are 'younger men', then seemingly the Annual Report of the Supplementary Benefits Commission is not for you. But the Report, in spite of its dominantly male concerns (which, after all, reflect the present paying out of supplementary benefits) does draw attention to the unequal treatment of women as claimants. It examines the ways in which such changes would give both additional rights and obligations and would be 'bound to raise the question whether the price for achieving equal treatment is too high to be justifiable. Our firm view is that it is not.'

Of vital concern to the Commission (but not necessarily represented in Government policy, as they hasten to tell us) is the recognition that claimants are having to live on completely inadequate incomes: for example, after a small increase this November, an unemployed man with a wife and two children aged 2 and 4 has to survive on £27.85 after paying the rent—a sum which the Commission notes is well below the wage level in the least skilled jobs.

So what does the Commission recommend? A raising of the level of child benefit; a single, simple system of income-related housing benefits; more accommodation for single people; and most crucial of all, 'higher minimum wages and effective enforcement of minimum wage regulations'. This seems a falsely optimistic and toothless recommendation in the light of the current employment figures, let alone pay squeezes. And it is women like Linda Wise, interviewed by Angela Phillips, who could feel justifiably cynical about the Commission's new recommendations.

JOHN STURROCK (REPORT)

Linda Wise and her son Gary

Linda Wise has been on the supplementary benefit tight rope for three years now. It started when her husband left her with two children aged 4 and 5. At first she didn't expect to be on SS for very long but she soon realised that the money wouldn't come from anywhere else. The local factories weren't interested in taking on a woman with young children. And the sort of part time work she'd been doing before her marriage ended would provide too little to cover expenses, but just enough to get her benefit stopped. In any case, she feels that her children need her at home. In September she started a job working three hours a day washing up, for £6 a week, the maximum she's entitled to before having benefit cut.

Out of £33.03 plus £2.50 per week family allowance, Linda puts aside £11 for the rent, £5 for gas and electricity and the week's food comes to about £9. Some people think that her telephone is a luxury she should do without but she feels that people on their own need a phone. She certainly did in the early days, when her husband came banging on the door in the early hours of the morning threatening her.

The SS do give a bit of extra help in the shape of 'discretionary grants'. They've helped her with blankets for the children but they will only pay for one pair of trousers a year. Linda's boys grow out of them in a few months, but fortunately her brother is young enough to furnish them with his cast-offs. As for her, she admits that 'all my clothes are other people's left-offs'.

As long as she doesn't indulge in luxuries like an evening out, they can just about manage when things go smoothly. However, Linda can't allow for the unexpected. In August she got a gas bill for £85. The Gas people kindly explained that they'd underestimated her two previous bills. Fearing that she'd be cut off, Linda approached the Social Security people. Their only advice was to give up smoking as a way of saving money. They could only help if she had a young baby or a sick relative. Now she is paying an extra £2 a week towards her debt.

She got behind with her rent as well a few months ago when a 'boyfriend' disappeared with the rent and telephone money. That really frightened her. She can cope with most things short of eviction. Now she's had to add the rent arrears to her weekly expenditure. She's had bad luck with men. But in some ways that helps. If she had a regular boyfriend, her money could be stopped altogether. The state expects every man to pay for 'his' woman. She is glad not to be dependent on her husband for money; he didn't give her any as it was, but she doesn't feel any more independent now. 'You're married to them (the social security), whatever you do you've got to tell them.'□

New Creche

For a few parents in London, the dream of co-operatively controlled, cheap childcare has become a reality. The Kingsway Children's Centre opened at the beginning of September for about 30 children, ranging from a few months to school age. The centre is the result of 18 months of planning and organising by a joint trade union committee initiated by the staff at the TUC.

The centre is unique in several ways. For a start, it is (as far as we know) the only creche to be organised solely by employees of participating firms, independent of any particular management. Secondly, it is the first creche to be financially supported by a number of employers paying two-thirds of each child's place while the parents pay one-third. The money is to be paid six months in advance, which gives the creche some financial stability.

The creche management committee is made up of the staff, plus one member of each participating organisation, irrespective of the number of places paid for. It is expected that representatives will be either from the trade unions involved or parents (preferably one and the same). Again, this ensures that no single organisation gains control, and that preference for places will not always go to the larger firms.

The cost of each place is £20 a week, of which parents pay £7. This price reflects the high staff ratio required for children under two years old. To make the cost reasonably economic for everyone, the number of really young babies will be kept at a proportion of nine to 21.

The staffing also reflects the thinking behind the project: both nursery nurses and nursery teachers have been employed, avoiding the failing of many council schemes which separate creche and nursery facilities, providing the former merely for care and the latter for education (usually part time). At Kingsway, education is seen as part of the function, and the skills of the staff are expected to overlap. Payment will be on the higher teaching scale rather than the abysmally low rates for nursery nurses.

Money to get the scheme going was raised in loans and grants from participating organisations. Camden Council provided a loan of £5000. The luckiest find was the centre itself, a disused nursery attached to the Kingsway Mission in Holborn, a place conveniently close to work for all the parents involved in the scheme. They have use of it rent free.

The organisation of childcare facilities requires planning and capital before it starts, as well as knowledge of all the regulations which govern the public care of children, and a real understanding of the needs of both children and parents. Kingsway proves that it is economically possible for even small firms to provide childcare facilities. It should provide a useful example for all those of us trying to negotiate with employers for creches.□

Angela Phillips

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